AN

EXPOSITION,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,

OF THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET

EZEKIEL.

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

I. Concerning the person of it—it was Ezekiel; his name signifies, The strength of God; or one girt or strengthened of God. He girded up the loins of his mind to the service, and God put strength into him. Whom God calls to any service he will himself enable for it; if he gives commission, he will give power to execute it. Ezekiel's name was answered when God said, (and no doubt did as he said,) I have made thy face strong against their faces. The learned Selden, in his book De Dis Syris, says, that it was the opinion of some of the ancients, that the prophet Ezekiel was the same with that Nazeratus Assyrius, whom Pythagoras (as himself relates) had for his tutor for some time, and whose lectures he attended; and it is agreed that they lived much about the same time. We have reason to think that many of the Greek philosophers were acquainted with the sacred writings, and borrowed some of the best of their notions from them. If we may credit the tradition of the Jews, he was put to death by whom he cured captive in Babylon, for his faithfulness and boldness in reproving them; it is stated that they dragged him upon the stones till his brains were dashed out. An Arabic historian says that he was put to death, and was buried in the sepulchre of Shem the son of Noah. So Hottinger relates, Thomist. Philol. lib. ii. cap. I.

II. Concerning the date of it—the place whence it is dated, and the time when. The scene is laid in Babylon, when it was a house of bondage to the Israel of God; there the prophecies of this book were preached, there they were written, when the prophet himself, and the people to whom he prophesied, were captives there. Ezekiel and Daniel are the only writing prophets of the Old Testament who lived and prophesied anywhere but in the land of Israel, except we add Jonah, who was sent to Nineveh to prophesy. Ezekiel prophesied in the beginning of the captivity, Daniel in the latter end of it; it was an indication of God's good will to them, and his gracious designs concerning them in their affliction, that he raised up prophets among them, both to convince them, when, in the beginning of their troubles, they were secure and unumbled, which was Ezekiel's business, and to comfort them, when, in the latter end of their troubles, they were dejected and discouraged. If the Lord had been pleased to kill them, he would not have used such apt and proper means to cure them.

III. Concerning the matter and scope of it: 1. There is much in it that is very mysterious, dark, and hard to be understood; especially in the beginning and the latter end of it; which therefore the Jewish rabbins forbade the reading of to their young men, till they came to be thirty years of age, lest by the difficulties they met with there they should be prejudiced against the scriptures; but if we read these difficult parts of scripture with humility and reverence, and search them diligently, though we may not be able to notify all the knots we meet with, no more than we can solve all the phenomena in the book of nature, yet we may form, as from the book of nature, gather a great deal for the confirming of our faith, and the encouraging of our hope, in the God we worship. 2. Though the visions here be intricate, such as an elephant may swim in, yet the sermons are mostly plain, such as a lamb may wade in; and the chief design of them is to show God's people their transgressions, that in their captivity they might be repenting, and not repenting. It should seem, he was constantly attended, for we read of their sitting before him as God's people sat to hear his words; (ch. xxxiii. 31.) and that he was occasionally consulted, for we read of the elders of Israel who came to inquire of the Lord by him, (ch. xiv. 1, 5.) And as it was of great use to the oppressed captives themselves to have a prophet with them, so it was a testimony to their holy religion against their oppressors, who ridiculed it and them. 3. Though the reproofs and the threatening here be very sharp and bold, yet toward the close of the book very comfortable assurances are given of great mercy God had in store for them; and there, at length, we shall meet with something that has reference to gospel-times, and which was to have its accomplishment in the kingdom of the Messiah, of whom indeed this prophet speaks less than almost any of the prophets. But by opening the terrors of the Lord he prepares Christ's way; by the law is the knowledge of sin, and so it becomes our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. The visions, which were
The Book of the Prophet EZEKIEL.

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

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

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

1. The time when Ezekiel had this vision, is here recorded. It was in the thirtieth year, v. 1. Some make it the thirtieth year of the prophet's age; being a priest, he might, at that age, have been ready for full execution of the priestly office, but being debared from that by the iniquity and calamity of the times, now that they had neither temple nor altar, God at that age called him to the dignity of a prophet. Others make it to be the thirtieth year from the beginning of the reign of Nabopassar, the father of Nebuchadnezzar, from which the Chaldeans began the computation of time, as was done from Nabonassar one hundred and twenty-three years before. Nabopassar reigned nineteen years, and this was the eleventh of his son, which makes the thirty. And it was proper enough for Ezekiel, when he was in Babylon, to use the computation they there used; as we in foreign countries date by the new style; and he afterwards uses the melancholy computation of his own country, observing, (v. 2.) that it was the fifth year of Jehoiachin's captivity. But the Chaldee Paraphrase fixes upon another era, and says that this was the thirtieth year after Hilkiah the priest found the book of the law in the house of the sanctuary, at midnight during the moon, in the days of Josiah the king. And it is true, that this was just thirty years from that time; and that was an event so remarkable, (as it put the Jewish state upon a new trial,) that it was proper enough to date from it; and perhaps therefore the prophet speaks indefinitely of thirty years, as having an eye both to that event, and to the Chaldean computation, which were coincident.

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

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

The prophet of God was now, some of them, captives in the land of the Chaldeans. The body of the Jewish nation yet remained in their own land, but these were the first-fruits of the captivity, and they were some of the best: for in Jeremiah's vision these were the good figs, whom God had sent into the land of the Chaldeans for their good; (Jer. xxiv. 5.) and that it might be for their good, God misled a prophet among them, to teach them out of the law, then when he chastened them, Ps. xcvii. 12. Note, It is a great mercy to have the word of God brought us, and a great duty to attend to it diligently when we are in affliction. The word of instruction and the rod of correction may be of great service to us, in concert and concurrence with each other: the word to explain the rod, and the rod to enforce the word; both together give wisdom. It is happy for a man, when he is sick and in pain, to have a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, if he have but his ear open to discipline, Job. xxxiii. 23. One of the quarrels God had with the Jews, when he sent them into captivity, was for mocking his messengers and misusing his prophets; and yet when they were suffering for this sin, he favoured them with this forlorn mercy. It were ill with us if God did not sometimes graciously thrust upon us those means of grace and salvation which we have foolishly thrust from us. In their captivity they wanted ordinary helps for their souls, and therefore God raised up these extraordinary ones; for God's children, if they be
hindered in their education one way, shall have it made up another way. But observe, It was in the fifth year of the captivity that Ezekiel was raised up among them, and not before. So long God left them without any prophet, till they began to lament after the Lord, and to complain that they saw not their signs, and there was none to tell them how long; (Ps. lxiv. 9.) and then they would know how to value a prophet, and God's discoveries of himself to them by him would be the more acceptable and capable. The Jews with this, and that they had Jeremiah with them, those that were gone into captivity had Ezekiel with them; for wherever the children of God are scattered abroad he will find out tutors for them.

2. The prophet was himself among the captives, those of them that were posted by the river Chebar; for it was by the rivers of Babylon that they sat down in愁. The Jews were employed in the building of street trees by and by, and invented that they hanged their harps, Ps. cxxxvii. 2. The planters in America keep along by the sides of the rivers, and perhaps those captives were employed by their masters in improving some parts of the country by the rivers' sides that were uncultivated, the natives being generally employed in war; or they employed them in manufactures, and therefore would not fix them to the sides of rivers, that the gods and the winds might the more easily be conveyed by water-carriage. Interpreters agree not what river this of Chebar was, but among the captives by that river Ezekiel was, and himself a captive. Observe here, (1.) The best men, and those that are dearest to God, often share, not only in the common calamities of this life, but in the public and national judgments that are inflicted for sin; they feel the smart who contributed nothing to the guilt, by which it appears that the difference between good and bad arises not from the events but from the temper and disposition of their spirits under them. And since not only righteous men, but prophets, share with the worst in present punishments, we may infer thence, with the greatest assurance, that there are rewards reserved for them in the future state. (2.) Words of conviction, counsel, and comfort, come best to those who are in affliction from their fellow-sufferers. The captives will be best instructed by one who is a captive among them, and experimentally knows their sorrows. (3.) The spirit of prophecy was not confined to the land of Israel, but some of the brightest of the ancients were revealed in the land of the Chaldeans, which was a happy presage of the carrying of the church, with that divine revelation upon which it is built, into the Gentile world; and as now, so afterward, when the gospel-kingdom was to be set up, the dispersion of the Jews contributed to the spreading of the knowledge of God. (4.) Wherever we are, we may keep up our communion with God. Undique ad colos tantundem est visio. From the revelations we see how far the Divine eye is open heavenward. (5.) When God's ministers are bound, the word of the Lord is not bound, 2 Tim. ii. 9. When St. Paul was a prisoner, the gospel had a free course. When St. John was banished into the Isle of Patmos, Christ visited him there; nay, God's suffering servants have generally been treated as favorably, and their consolations have much more abounded then when affliction has abounded, 2 Cor. i. 5.

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

1. He saw visions of God, v. 1. No man can see God, and live; but many have seen visions of God, such displays of the divine glory as have both astonished and affected them; and commonly when God first revealed himself to any prophet, he did it by an extraordinary vision, as to Isaiah, (ch. vi.) to Jeremiah, (ch. 1.) to Abraham; (Acts vii. 2.) to settle a correspondence and a satisfactory way of intercourse, so that there needed not afterward a vision upon every revelation. Ezekiel was employed in turning the hearts of the people to the Lord their God, and therefore he must himself see the visions of God. Note, It concerns those to be well acquainted with God themselves, and much affected with what they know of him, whose business it is to bring others to the knowledge and love of him. That he might see the visions of God, the heavens were opened; the darkness and distance which hindered his visions were conquered, and he was let into the light of the glories of the upper world, as plain and clear as if heaven had been opened to him.

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

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

4. And I looked, and, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire inwinding itself, and a brightness was about it, and out of the midst thereof, as the colour of amber, out of the midst of the fire: 5. Also out of the midst thereof came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance; they had the likeness of a man. 6. And every one had four faces, and every one had four wings. 7. And their feet were straight feet, and the sole of their feet was like the sole of a calf's foot; and they sparkled like the colour of burnished brass. 8. And they had the hands of a man under their wings, on their four sides; and they four had their faces and their wings. 9. Their wings were joined one to another; they turned not
Now, to answer these ends, we have in these verses the first part of the vision, which represents God as attended and served by an innumerable company of angels, who are all his messengers, his ministers, doing his commandments, and hearkening to the voice of his word; this denotes his grandeur; as it magnifies an earthly prince to have a splendid retinue, and numerous armies at his command; thus his subjects are led to trust in him, and his enemies to fear him.

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

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

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

2. The fire is surrounded with a glory; A brightness was about it, in which it infolded itself, yet it made some discovery of itself. Though we cannot see into the fire, cannot by searching find out God to perfection, yet we see the brightness that is round about it, the reflection of this fire from the thick cloud. Moses might see God’s back parts, but not his face; we have some light concerning the nature of God, from the brightness which envelopes it, though we have not an insight into it, by reason of the cloud spread upon it. Nothing is more easy
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than to determine that God is; nothing more difficult than to describe what he is. When God displays his wrath as fire, yet there is a brightness about it; for his holiness and justice appear very illustrous in the punishment of sin and sinners; even above the sun. There is a brightness of the glory of God, which glorified saints will ever admire.

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

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

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

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

3. Their qualifications, by which they are fitted for the service of their Maker and Master. These are set forth figuratively and by similitude, as is proper in visions, which are parables to the eye. Their description here is such, and so expressed, that, I think, I can make our readers form an exact idea of them in our fancy, or with the pencil, for that would be a temptation to worship them; but the several instances of their fitness for the work they are employed in, are intended in the several parts of this description. Note, It is the greatest honour of God's creatures to be in a capacity of answering the end of their creation; and the more ready we are to every good work, the nearer we approach to the dignity of angels.

These living creatures are described here,

[1.] By their general appearance; They had the likeness of a man, they appeared, for the main, in a human shape. First, To signify that these living creatures are reasonable creatures, intelligent beings, who have that spirit of a man, which is the essence of the soul. Secondly, To put an honour upon the nature of man, which is the most vile, but a little lower than the angels, in the very next rank of beings below them; when the invisible intelligences of the upper world would make themselves visible, it is in the likeness of man. Thirdly, To intimate that their delights are with the sons of men, as their Master's are, (Prov. viii. 31.), that they do service to men, and may have spiritual communion with them by faith, hope, and love.

Fourthly, The angels of God appear in the likeness of man, because in the fulness of time the Son of God was not only to appear in that likeness, but to assume that nature; they therefore show this love to it.

[2.] By their faces; every one had four faces, looking four several ways. In St. John's vision, which has a near affinity with this, each of the four living creatures has one of these faces here mentioned; (Rev. iv. 7.) here each of them has all four, to intimate that they have all the same qualifications for service; though, perhaps, among the angels of heaven, as among the angels of the churches, some excel in one gift, and others in another, but all for the common service. Let us contemplate their faces till we have learned the meaning of the same image, that we may do the will of God as the angels do it in heaven. They all four had the face of a man; (for in that likeness they appeared, v. 5.) but, beside that, they had the face of a lion, an ox, and an eagle, each masterly in his kind; the lion among wild beasts, the ox among tame ones, and the eagle among fowls, v. 16. Does God make use of them for the executing of judgments upon his enemies? They are fierce and strong as the lion and the eagle in tracing their prey. Does he make use of them for the god of his people? They are as oxen, strong for labour and inclined to serve. And in both they have the understanding of a man.

The scattered perfections of the living creatures on earth meet in the angels in heaven. They have the same likeness, but, because there are some things in which man is excelled even by the inferior creatures, they are therefore compared to some of them; they have the understanding of a man, and such as far exceeds it; they also resemble man in tenderness and humanity; but, First, A lion excels man in strength and boldness, and is much more formidable; therefore the angels have the face of a lion. Secondly, An ox excels man in diligence and patience, and painstaking, and an unwearied discharge of the work he has to do; therefore the angels, who are constantly employed in the service of God and the church, put on the face of an ox. Thirdly, An eagle excels man in quickness and piercingness of sight, and
soaring high; and therefore the angels, who seek things above, and see far into divine mysteries, put on the face of a flying eagle.

[3.] By their wings: Every one had four wings, (v. 6.) In the vision Isaiah had of them, they appeared with six, now with four; for they appeared above the throne, and had occasion for two to cover their faces with. The use of their wings for decoration, as some birds do, there is no contest among the angels, God makes peace, perfect peace, in his high places; but their wings were joined in token of their perfect unity and unanimity, and the universal agreement there is among them. Secondly, That they were stretched upward, extended and ready for use, not folded up or flagging. Let an angel receive the least intimation that he has anything to seek, but is upon the wing immediately; while our poor, dull souls are like the ostrich, that with much difficulty lifts up herself on high. Thirdly, That two of their wings were made use of in covering their bodies, the spiritual bodies they assumed. The clothes that cover us, are our hinderance in work; angels need no other covering than their own wings. They cover their bodies from us, so forbidding us needless inquiries concerning them: ask not after them, for they are wonderful, Judg. xiii. 18. They cover them before God, so directing us, when we approach to God, to see it to that we be so clothed with Christ's righteousness, that the shame of our nakedness may not afflict us.

[4.] By their feet, including their legs and thighs; They were straight feet; (v. 7.) they stood straight, and firm, and steady, no burden of service could make their legs to bend under them. The spouse makes this part of the description of her beloved, that his legs were as pillars of marble set upon sockets of fine gold; ( Cant. v. 12.) such are the angels, strong, firm, sure and sure of their feet. Their feet were like a cock's feet, which divides the hoof, and is therefore clean; as it were the sole of a round foot, (as the Chaldee words it,) they were ready for motion any way. Their feet were winged; (so the Seventy;) they went so swiftly, that it was as if they flew. And their very feet sparkled like the colour of burnished brass: not only their faces, but the very feet, of as much grace, whither God sends on his errands; (Isa. lii. 7.) every step the angels take is glorious. In the vision John had of Christ, it is said, His feet were like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace, Rev. i. 15.

[5.] By their hands; (v. 8.) They had the hands of a man under their wings on their four sides; an arm and a hand under every wing. They had not only wings for motion, but hands for action on his eye are quick, who are not active; they hurry about a great deal, but do nothing to purpose, bring nothing to pass; they have wings, but no hands; whereas God's servants, the angels, not only go when he sends them, and come when he calls them, but do what he bids them. They are the hands of a man, which are wonderfully made, and fitted for service; which are guided by reason and understanding; for what angels do, they do intelligently and with judgment. They have calves' feet; this denotes the swiftness of their motion; (the cedars of Lebanon are said to skip like a calf, Ps. xxix. 6.) but they have a man's hand; this denotes the niceness and exactness of their performances; as the heavens are said to be the work of God's fingers. Their hands were under their wings, which concealed them as they did the rest of their bodies. Note, The agency of angels is a secret thing, and their work is carried on in an invisible way. In working for God, though we must not, with the sluggard, hide our hand in the bosom of our garments, yet we may shut our left hand know what our right hand doeth. We may observe, that where these wings were, their hands were under their wings; wherever their wings carried them, they carried hands along with them, to be still doing something suitable, something that the duty of the place requires.

(4.) Their motions. The living creatures are moving before the Lord, and by the vision, to shew that their happiness sat still, and do nothing, but to be always well employed, and we must reckon ourselves then best, when we are doing good; doing it as the angels do it, of whom it is here observed.

[1.] That whatever service they went about, they went every one straight forward, (v. 9, 12.) which intimates, First, That they sincerely aimed at the glory of God, and had a single eye to that, in all they did; their going straight forward supposes that they looked straight forward, and never had any sinister intentions in what they did. And if thus our eye be single, our whole body will be full of light; the singleness of the eye is the sincerity of the heart. Secondly, That they were intent upon the service they were employed in, and did it with such slip and dexterity, that there was nothing out of their work; for what their hand found to do, they did it with all their might, and did not loiter in it. Thirdly, That they were unanimous in it; they went straight forward, every one about his own work, they did not thwart or jostle another, did not stand in one another's light, in one another's way. Fourthly, That they perfectly understood their business, and were thorough they went of it, so that they needed not to stand still to pause or hesitate, but they pursued their work with readiness, as those that knew what they had to do, and how to do it. Fifthly, They were steady and constant in their work; they did not fluctuate, did not tire, did not vary, but were of a piece with themselves; they moved in a direct line, and so went the nearer to their end in the shortest time. When we go straight, we go forward, when we serve God with one heart, we rid ground, we rid work.

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

[3.] They went whither the Spirit was to go; (v. 12.) either, First, Whither their own spirit was disposed to go; thither they went, having no bodies, as we have, to clog or hinder them. It is our infidelity and daily burden, that, when the spirit is willing yet the flesh is weak, and cannot keep pace with it, so that the good which we would do, we do it not; but angels and glorified saints labour under no such infirmity, whatever they incline or intend to do, they do it, and never come short of it. Or, rather, Secondly, Whithersoever the Spirit of God would have them go thither they went; though they had so much wisdom of their own, yet in all their motions and actions they subject themselves to the conduct and government of the divine will; whithersoever the divine providence was to go, they went, to serve its purposes, and to execute its orders. The Spirit of God (says Mr. Greenhill) is the great
The appearance of the wheels and their work was like unto the colour of a beryl; and they four had one likeness: and their appearance and their work was as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel. 17. When they went, they went upon their four sides; and they turned not when they went. 18. As for their rings, they were so high, that they were dreadful; and their rings were full of eyes round about them four. 19. And when the living creatures went, the wheels went by them; and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up. 20. Whithersoever the spirit was to go, they went, thither was their spirit to go; and the wheels were lifted up over against them: for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels. 21. When those went, these went; and when those stood, these stood; and when those were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up over against them: for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels. 22. And the likeness of the firmament upon the heads of the living creature was as the colour of the terrible crystal, stretched forth over their heads above. 23. And under the firmament were their wings straight, one toward the other: every one had two, which covered on this side, and every one had two, which covered on that side, their bodies. 24. And when they went, I heard the noise of their wings, like the noise of great waters, as the voice of the Almighty, the voice of speech, as the noise of a host: when they stood, they let down their wings. 25. And there was a voice from the firmament that was over their heads, when they stood, and had let down their wings.

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

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

Agent that sets angels to work, and it is their honour that they are led, they are easily led, by the Spirit. See how quite different is the condition of men, when they are unspiritual; they are led astray, and led away into every kind of evil. Whithersoever the Spirit is to go, they go immediately, with all possible alacrity. Note, Those that walk after the Spirit, do the will of God as the angels do it.

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

Lastly, We have an account of the light by which the prophet saw these living creatures, or the looking-glass in which he saw them, v. 13. [1.] He saw them by their own light, for their appearance was like burning coals of fire; they are seraphim-burners; denoting the ardour of their love to God, their fervent zeal in his service, their splendid and brightness, and their terror against God's enemies. When God employs them to fight his battles, they are as coals of fire, (Ps. xviii. 12.) to devour the adversaries in the lightnings shot out to destroy them. [2.] He saw them by the light of some lamps, which went up and down among them, the shining whereof was very bright. Satan's works are works of darkness, he is the ruler of the darkness of this world; but the angels of light are in the light, and though they conceal their working, they show their work, for it will bear the light. But we see them, and their works only by candle-light, by the dawn light, and light and darkness among them, when the day breaks, and the shadows flee away, we shall see them clearly. Some make the appearance of these burning coals, and of the lightnings that issues out of the fire, to signify the wrath of God, and his judgments, that were now to be executed upon Judah and Jerusalem for their sins, in which angels were to be employed: and seeing they are mentioned after the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, (ch. x. 23.) which was by fire, when the city was turned to ashes, by the fire that proceeded from between the cherubims, ch. x. 2. But by the appearance of the lamps then, we may understand the light of comfort which shone forth to the people of God in the darkness of this present trouble. If the ministry of the angels is a consuming fire to God's enemies, it is as a rejoicing light to his own children. To the outer world it is a discomforting and refreshing: to the other, out of the fire comes fresh lightning to destroy them. Note, Good angels are our friends, or enemies, according as God is.

15. Now, as I beheld the living creatures, behold, one wheel upon the earth by the living creatures, with his four faces. 16.
The dispensations of Providence are compared to wheels, either the wheels of a chariot, in which the conqueror rides in triumph, or, rather, the wheels of a clock or watch, which all contribute to the regular motion of the machine. We read of the dispensations of Providence as before set before us as under the direction of the Good of nature. Wheels, though they move not of themselves, as the living creatures do, are yet made moveable, and are almost continually kept in action. Providence, represented by these wheels, produces changes; sometimes one spoke of the wheel is uppermost, and sometimes another; but the motion of the wheel, which as often as the one above, is very regular and steady. The motion of the wheels is circular; by the revolutions of providence things are brought to the same posture and pass which they were in formerly; for the thing that is, is that which has been, and there is no new thing under the sun, Eccl. i. 9, 10.

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

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

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

3. The wheel is said to have four faces, looking four several ways, (v. 15.) denoting that the providence of God extends itself in all parts of the world, east, west, north, and south, and extends itself to the remotest corner of the earth. That will upon the wheel of Providence, and it has a face toward you, a beautiful one, which you may admire the features and complexion of; it looks upon you as ready to speak to you, if you be but ready to hear the voice of it; like a well-drawn picture, it has an eye upon all that have an eye upon it. The wheel had so four faces, that it had in it four wheels, which is said to be a wheel, (v. 17.) At first, Ezekiel saw it as one wheel, (v. 15.) one sphere; but afterward, he saw it was four, but they had four likeness; (v. 16.) not only they were like one another, but they were as if they had been one. This intimates, (1.) That one event of providence is like another; what happens to us is that which is common to men, and what we are not to think strange. (2.) That various events have a tendency to the same issue, and concur to answer the same intention.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2. What he heard.  

(1.) He heard the noise of the angels' wings, v. 24. Bees and other insects make a great noise with the vibration of their wings; here the angels do so, to awaken the attention of the prophet to that which God was about to say to him from the firmament, v. 25. Angels, by the providences they are employed in, sound God's alarms to the children of men, and stir them up to hear his voice; for that it is no less to him in the court, and is heard and understood by the men of wisdom. The noise of their wings was loud and terrible as the noise of great waters, like the roar or roaring of the sea; and as the noise of a host, the noise of war; but it was articulate and intelligible, and did not give an uncertain sound; for it was the voice of speech; nay it was as the voice of the Almighty; for, by his providences, speaks once, yea twice; if we could but perceive it; (Job xxxiii. 14.) the Lord's voice cries, Mic. vi. 9.

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

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

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

1. This glory of Christ that the prophet saw, was above the firmament that was over the heads of the living creatures, v. 26. Note, The heads of angels themselves are under the feet of the Lord Jesus; for the firmament that is over their heads, is under his feet; angels, principalities, and powers, are made subject to him, 1 Pet. ii. 25. This dignity and dominion of the second Person in his incarnation magnify his condescension in his incarnation, when he was made a little lower than the angels, Heb. ii. 9.  

2. The first thing he observed, was a throne; for divine revelations come backed and supported with a royal authority: we must have an eye of faith to God and Christ as upon a throne. The first thing that John discovered in his visions was a throne set in heaven, (Rev. iv. 2.) which commands reverence
and subjection. It is a throne of glory, a throne of grace, a throne of triumph, a throne of government, a throne of judgment. The Lord has prepared his throne in the heavens, has prepared it for his Son, who, he has set King on his holy hill of Zion. (Ps. 89:就好, 1.)

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

4. The prophet sees him as a Prince and Judge upon this throne; though he appear in fashion as a man, yet he appears in more than human glory, v. 27. (1.) Is God a shining Light? So is he: when the prophet saw him, he saw as the colour of amber, that is, a brightness round about: for God dwells in light, and covers himself with light as with a garment. How low did the Redeemer stand for us, when, to bring about our salvation, he suffered his glory to be eclipsed by the veil of his humanity!

(2.) Is God a consuming Fire? So is he: from his loins, both upward and downward there was the appearance of fire. The fire above the loins was round about within the amber, it was inward and inward; that below the loins was more outward and open, and yet that also had brightness also round about. Some make the former to signify Christ's divine nature, the glory and virtue of which are hidden within the colour of amber; it is what no man has seen, or can see; the latter they suppose to be his human nature, the glory of which there were those who saw; the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, John i. 14. He had raiment pure and white as the snow, and yet there was the hiding of his power, Hab. iii. 4. The fire in which the Son of man appeared here, might be intended to signify the judgments that were ready to be executed upon Judah and Jerusalem, coming from that fiery indignation of the Almighty, which devours the adversaries. Nothing is more dreadful to the most daring sinners than the wrath of him that is the Lamb, and stand upon his feet, vi. 16. The day is coming, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed in flaming fire, 2 Thess. i. 7, 8. It concerns us therefore to kiss the Son, lest he be angry.

5. The throne is surrounded with a rainbow; (v. 28.) it is so in St. John's vision; (Rev. iv. 3.) the brightness about it was of divers colours, as the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain; which, as it is a display of majesty, and looks very great, so it is a pledge of mercy, and looks very kind; for it is a confirmation of the gracious promise God has made, that he will not drown the world again; and he has said, I will look upon the bow, and remember the covenant, Gen. ix. 16. This intimates that he who sits upon the throne, is the Mediator of the covenant, and it is for his effectual mediation that he interposes between us and the judgments our sins have deserved; and that all the promises of God are in him yea and amen. Now that the fire of God's wrath was breaking out against Jerusalem, bonds should be set to it, and he would not make an utter destruction of it, for he would look upon the bow, and remember the covenant, as he said, Lev. xxiv. 41. So, as St. Paul says, 2 Cor. iii. 17. Lastly, We have the conclusion of this vision: (1.) What notion the prophet himself had of it; This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. Here, as all along, he is careful to guard against all gross, corporeal thoughts of God, which might derogate from the transcendent purity of his nature. He does not say, This was the Lord, (for he is invisible,) but, This was the glory of the Lord, in which he was pleased to manifest himself a glorious Being; yet it is not the glory of the Lord, but the likeness of that glory, some faint resemblance of it, nor is it any adequate likeness of the glory, but only the appearance of that likeness, a shadow of it, and not the very image of the thing, Heb. x. 1.

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

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

CHAP. II.

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

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

The title here given to Ezekiel, as often afterwards, is very observable; God, when he speaks to him, calls him, Son of man, (v. 1, 5.) Son of Adam, Son of the earth. Daniel is once called so, (Dan. viii. 17.) but but once; the compulsion is used to
II. Ezekiel is here sent, and made to go, with a message to the children of Israel; (v. 3.) I send thee to the children of Israel. God had for many ages been sending to them his servants the prophets, rising up betimes, and sending them, by the office of men, to be his messengers to the house of Israel, for we have this treasure in earthen vessels, and God's messages sent us by men like ourselves, whose terror shall not make us afraid, nor their hand be heavy upon us. Ezekiel was a priest, but the priesthood was brought low, and the honour of it laid in the dust: it therefore became him, and all of his order, to humble themselves, and to lie low, as some men, contrary to the expectation, were employed as an prophet, God's ambassador, and a ruler over the kingsoms, (Jer. i. 10.) a post of great honour, but he must remember that he is a son of man, and whatever good he did, it was not by any might of his own, for he was a son of man, but in the strength of divine grace, which must therefore have all the glory. Or, 2. We may take it as an honourable, dignifying title; for it is one of the titles of the Messiah in the Old Testament; (Dan. vii. 13.) I saw one like the Son of man come with the clouds of heaven, from whence Christ borrows the title he often calls himself by, The Son of man. The prophets were types of him, as they had near access to God, and great authority among men; and therefore as David the king is called the Lord's anointed, or Christ, so Ezekiel the prophet is called son of man.

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

1. By a divine command; Son of man, stand upon thy feet. His lying prostrate was a posture of great reverence, but his standing up would be a posture of greater readiness and fitness for business. Ouradorings of God must often be rather raised than excited. The Gentiles were to be taught by God to their God, and by the revelation of the Gospel of their sins; not by any of their own invention, but by the word of God. They are not to be exalted, but to be humbled; nor to think of themselves, but of God. Our wills, if under the God's will, will not be against it. We must use our wisdom to understand and obey God's will, and the divine power will work in us, and give us strength, and will put strength into us, we must work out our salvation, and then God will work in us. He observed that the Spirit entered into him then when Christ spake to him; for Christ conveys his Spirit by his word as the ordinary means, and makes the word effectual by the Spirit. The Spirit set the prophet upon his feet, to raise him up from his dejections, for he is the Comforter. Thus, in the like case, Daniel was

strengthened by a divine touch, (Dan. x. 18.) and John was raised by the right hand of Christ laid upon him, Rev. i. 17. The Spirit set him upon his feet, made him willing and forward to do as he was bidden, and then he heard him that spoke to him. He heard the voice before, (ch. i. 28.) but now he heard it more distinctly and clearly, and, therefore, and, under it, and that he might not therefore forget what it was, or lose the sense of it, he was placed thus to manifest himself to him. Now he is among the living creatures, the angels; yet he must remember that he is himself a man, a dying creature. What is man, or the son of man, that he should be thus visited, thus dignified? Though God had here a splendid retinue of holy angels about his throne, who were ready to go on his errands, yet he forgot them all by, and pitches on him, and tells him, that for Son of man, and therefore his Son, he will manifest himself to him, by inclining our will to our duty, and thereby dispenses the understanding to receive the knowledge of it.

II. The rebellion of the people to whom this ambassador is sent; he is sent to reduce them to their allegiance, to bring back the children of Israel to the Lord their God; let the prophet know that there is occasion for his going on this errand, for they are a rebellious nation, (v. 3.) a rebellious house, v. 5. They are called children of Israel; they retain the name of their pious ancestors, but they are wickedly degenerated, and, are therefore called, the children of the devil, (Amos i. 7.) for they are rebellious; and rebels at home, and in foreign parts, in opposition to their rightful Sovereign, and by homage and paid tribute to the usurper, which is the highest degree of rebellion that can be.

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

(2.) They were now hardened in their rebellion. They are impudent children, brazen-faced, and cannot blush; they are stiff-hearted, self-willed, and cannot bend, cannot stoop; neither will they be instructed in the fear of God, nor receive rebukes, nor be taught by their sins, they will not be brought up by the sense either of honour or duty. We are willing to hope this was not the character of all, but of many, and those perhaps the leading men. Observe, [1.] God knew this concerning them, how inexcusable, how incorrigible, they were. Note, God is perfectly acquainted with every man's true character, whatever his pretensions and professions may be. [2.] He told the prophet this, that he might be the better how to deal with them, and what handle to take them by. He must rebuke such men as those
Thus 13.) rebelrous as Ezekiel. He brier. the book before, And sent, the'.

\[\text{...and they are as a rebellious house. 8. And thou, son of man, hear what I say unto thee; Be not thou rebellious like that rebellious house: open thy mouth, and eat that I give thee. 9. And when I looked, behold, a hand was sent unto me; and, lo, a roll of a book was therein; 10. And he spread before me: and it was written within and without; and there was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and wo.}

The prophet, having received his commission, here receives a charge with it. It is a post of honour to which he is advanced, but withal it is a post of service and work, and it is here required of him, I. That he be hold. He must act in the discharge of this trust with an undaunted courage and resolution, and not be either driven off from his work, or made to drive on heavily, by the difficulties and oppositions that he would be likely to meet with in it; Son of man, be not afraid of them, v. 6. Note, Those that will do any thing to purpose in the service of God, must not be afraid of the face of man; for the fear of men will bring a snare, which will be very entangling to us in the work of God. I. God tells the prophet what was the character of his work. He is to be his ambassador. 2. They are briars and thorns, scratching, and tearing, and vexing a man, which way soever he turns. They are continually teasing God's prophets, and entangling them in their talk; (Matth. xxiii. 15.) they are prickling briers and grieving thorns. The best of them is as a brier, and the most upright sharper than a thorn-hedge, Mic. vii. 4. Thorns and briers are the fruit of sin and the curse; and of these they make use of them sometimes for the correction and instruction of his people, as Gideon taught the men of Succoth with thorns and briers, Judg. viii. 16. Yet this is not the worst of their character, they are scorpions, venomous and malignant; the sting of a scorpion is a thousand times more hurtful than the scratch of a brier. Persecutors are a generation of vipers, are of the serpent's family; they are ministers of Satan to bring them to destruction; and they are more subtle than any beast of the field. And, which makes the prophet's case the more grievous, he dwells among these scorpions; they are continually about him, so that he cannot be safe or quiet in his own house; these bad men are his bad neighbours, who thereby have many opportunities, and will let slip none to do him a mischief. God takes care of his servants as Christ does of the angel of one of the churches; (Rev. ii. 13.) I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is. Ezekiel had been in vision, conversing with angels, but when he comes down from this mount, he finds he dwells with scorpions. 2. He tells him what would be their conduct towards him, that they would do what they could to frighten him with their looks and their words; they

6. And thou, son of man, be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words, though briers and thorns be with thee, and thou dost dwell among scorpions: be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house. 7. And thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear: for they are most rebellious. 8. But thou, son of man, hear what I say unto thee; Be not thou rebellious like that rebellious house: open thy mouth, and eat that I give thee. 9. And when I looked, behold, a hand was sent unto me; and, lo, a roll of a book was therein; 10. And he spread before me: and it was written within and without; and there was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and wo.
would hector him and threaten him, would look scornfully and spitefully at him, and do their utmost to face him down, and put him out of countenance, that they might drive him off from being a prophet, or at least from telling them of their faults, and then entreat him with the judgments of God; or, if they could not prevail in this, that they might vex and perplex him, and disturb the repose of his mind. They were now themselves in subjection, divested of all power, so that they had no other way of persecuting the prophet than with their looks and their words; and so they did persecute him. Behold, thou hast spoken and done evil things even under the eyes of the Jews. If they had had more power they would have done more mischief. They were now in captivity, smarting for their rebellion, and particularly their misusing of God's prophets; and yet they are as bad as ever. Though thou braise a fool in a mortar, yet will not his foolishness depart from him; no provisions will of themselves humble and reform men, unless the grace of God work with them. But, how malicious soever they were, Ezekiel must not be afraid of them, nor dismayed, he must not be deterred from his work, or any part of it, nor be disheartened or dispirited in it by all their menaces, but go on in it with resolution and cheerfulness, assuring himself of safety under the divine protection.

II. It is required that he be faithful, v. 7. 1. He must be faithful to Christ who sent him; Thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel, and shalt say unto them, etc. Note, As it is the honour of prophets, that they are intrusted to speak God's words, so it is their duty to cleave closely to them, and to speak nothing but what is agreeable to the words of God; ministers must always speak according to that rule. 2. He must be faithful to the souls of them to whom he was sent; whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, he must deliver his message to them as he received it. He must bring them to comply with the word, and not study to accommodate the word to their humours. It is true, they are most rebellions, they are rebellion itself; but, however, speak thy words to them, whether they are pleasing or displeasing. Note, The untractableness and unprofitableness of people under the word, are no good reasons why ministers should decline and desist from doing their duty, or decline an opportunity by which good may be done, though we have a great deal of reason to think no good will be done.

III. It is required that he be able to instruct. 1. Here is a general intimation what the instructions were, that were given him, in the contents of the book which was spread before him, ch. 3. 10. His instructions were large, for the roll was written within and without, on the inside and on the outside of the roll; it was as a sheet of paper written on all the four sides. One side contained their sins, the other side contained the judgments of God coming upon them for those sins. Note, God has a great deal to say to his people when they are degenerated and become rebellious. 2. His instructions were manfully given him, ch. 3. 11. He was sent to a sad errand; the matter contained in the book was, lamentations, and mourning, and woe. The idea of his message is taken from the impression it would make upon the minds of those that carefully attended to it; it would set them a weeping and crying out, Woe, and, Alas! Both the discoveries of sin and the denominations of wrath would be matter of lamentation. What could be more lamentable, more mournful, more sad, than to see a holy, happy people sunk into such a state of sin and misery, as it appears by the prophecy of this book the Jews were at this time? Ezekiel echoes to Jeremiah's lamentations. Note, Though God is rich in mercy, yet impetuous sinners will find there are even among his words lamentations and woe.

2. Here is an express charge given the prophet to observe his instructions, both in receiving his message and delivering it. He is now to receive it, and is here commanded. (1.) To attend diligently to it; Son of man, hear what I say unto thee, v. 8. Note, Those that speak from God to others, must be sure to hear from God themselves, and be obedient to his voice; Be not thou rebellious; do not refuse to go on this errand, or to deliver it; do not fly off, as Jonah did, for fear of disobliger the commission given to him. They call a rebellious hand upon whom thou livest; but be not thou like them, do not comply with them in any thing that is evil. If ministers, who are reprovers by office, coniune at sin, and indulge sinners, either show them not their wickedness, or show them not the fatal consequences of it, for fear of displeasing them, and getting their ill-will, they hereby make themselves partakers of their guilt, and are rebellions like them. If people will not do their duty in reforming, yet let ministers do theirs in reproving, and they will have the comfort of it in the reflection, whatever the success be, as that prophet had; (Isa. i. 5.) The Lord God has opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious. Even the best men, when their lot is cast in bad times and places, have need to be cautioned against the worst crimes.

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

CHAP. III.

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

1. Moreover, he said unto me, Son of man, eat that thou findest: eat this roll, and go speak unto the house of Israel. 2. So I opened my mouth, and he caused me to eat that roll. 3. And he said unto me, Son of man, cause thy belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with this roll that I give thee. Then did I eat it; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness.
be said unto me, Son of man, go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with my words unto them. 5. For thou art not sent to a people of a strange speech, and of a hard language, but to the house of Israel: 6. Not to many people of a strange speech, and of a hard language, whose words thou canst not understand: surely, had I sent thee to them, they would have hearkened unto thee. 7. But the house of Israel will not hearken unto thee: for they will not hearken unto me: for all the house of Israel are impudent and hard-hearted. 8. Behold, I have made thy face strong against their faces, and thy forehead strong against their foreheads. 9. As an adamant, harder than flint, have I made thy forehead: fear them not, neither be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house. 10. Moreover, he said unto me, Son of man, all my words that I shall speak unto thee receive in thy heart, and hear with thine ears. 11. And go, get thee to them of the captivity, unto thy people, and speak unto them, and tell them, Thus saith the Lord God, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear. 12. Then the spirit lifted me up, and I heard behind me a voice of a great rushing, saying, Blessed be the glory of the Lord from his place. 13. I heard also the noise of the wings of the living creatures that touched one another, and the noise of the wheels over against them, and a noise of a great rushing. 14. So the spirit lifted me up, and took me away, and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; but the hand of the Lord was strong upon me. 15. Then I came to them of the captivity at Telabib, that dwelt by the river of Chebar, and I sat where they sat, and remained there astonished among them seven days.

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

1. How he must receive divine revelation himself; v. 1. Christ (whom he saw upon the throne, ch. i. 26.) said to him, "Son of man, eat this roll; admit this revelation into thine understanding, take it, take the meaning of it, understand it aright, admit it into thy heart, apply it, and be affected with it; imprint it in thy mind, ruminate and chew the cud upon it; take it as it is entire, and make no difficulty of it, may, take a pleasure in it: as thou dost in thy meat, and let thy soul be nourished and strengthened by it; let it be meat and drink to thee, and as thy necessary food; be full of it, as thou art of the meat thou hast eaten." Thus ministers should in their studies and meditations take in that word of God, which they are to preach to others: Thy words were found, and I did eat them, Jer. xv. 16. They must be both well acquainted and much affected with the things of God, that they may speak of them both clearly and warmly, with a great deal of divine light and heat. Now observe,

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

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

3. How this command was obeyed in vision. He opened his mouth, and Christ caused him to eat the roll, v. 2. If we be truly willing to receive the word into our hearts, Christ will by his Spirit bring it into them, and cause it to dwell in us richly. If he that opens the roll, and by his Spirit, as a Spirit of revelation, spreads it before us, did not also open our understanding, and by his Spirit, as a Spirit of wisdom, give us the knowledge of it, and cause us to eat it, we should be for ever strangers to it. The prophet had no other way of being convinced to fear that the roll would be an unpleasant morsel and a sorry dish to make a meal of, but it proved to be in his mouth as honey for sweetness. Note, If we readily obey even the most difficult commands, we shall find that comfort in the reflection, which will make us abundant amends for all the hardships we meet with in the way of our duty. Though the roll was filled with lamentations, and mourning, and sorrow, yet it was to the prophet as honey for sweetness. Note, Gracious souls can receive those truths of God with great delight, which speak most terror to wicked people. We find St. John let into some part of the revelation by such a sign as this, Rev. x. 9. 10. He took the book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up, and it was, as this here, in his mouth sweet as honey; but it was bitter in his stomach, because it was the word of the Lord. Note, It was so too, for (v. 14.) the prophet went in bitterness.

11. How he must deliver that divine revelation to others, which he himself had received; (v. 1.) Eat this roll, and then go, speak to the house of Israel. 1. He must not undertake to preach the things of God to others, till he did himself fully understand them; let him have knowledge within himself and by the halves. 2. When he does himself fully understand them, he must be both busy and bold to preach them for the good of others. We must not
conceal the words of the Holy One, (Job vi. 10.) for that is burying a talent which we have given to trade with. He must go, and speak to the house of Israel, for it is their privilege to have God's statutes and judgments made known to them; as the giving of the law, (the lively oracles, so prophecy, (the living oracle,) pertains to them. He is not sent to the Chaldaees to represent them for their sins, but to the house of Israel: I must reveal them for theirs; for the father corrects his own child if he do amiss, not the child of a stranger.

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

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

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

(3.) He must remember what God had already told him of the bad character of those to whom he was sent, that if he met with discouragement and disappointment in them, he might not be offended. They are impudent and hard-hearted; (v. 7.) no convictions of sin would make them blush, no de- muncations of wrath would make them tremble. Two very great obstacles to their happiness; (1. 1.) That they were more obstinate than their neighbours would have been, if the prophet had been sent to them. Had God sent him to any other people, though of a strange speech, surely they would have hearkened to him, they would at least have given him a patient hearing, and showed him that respect which he could not obtain of his own countrymen. The Ninevites were wrought upon by Jonah's preaching, when the house of Israel, that was com- pared but with so great a cloud of prophets, was unhumbled and unreformed. But what shall we say to these things? The means of grace are given to those that will not improve them, and withheld from those that have improved them. We must resolve this into the divine sovereignty, and say, Lord, thy judgments are a great deep. (2.) That they were obstinate, against God himself; They will not hear me, or even understand my words; that for their sakes, they will not hear them; but regard the word of the prophet, for they will not regard the rod of God, by which the Lord's voice cries in the city. If they believe not God speaking to them by a minister, neither would they believe though he should speak to them by a voice from heaven; may, therefore they reject what the prophet says, because it comes from God, whom the carnal mind is enmity against; but still they are condemned against the law of God, and for that reason turn a deaf ear to his prophets, whose business it is to enforce his law.

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

(5.) He must continue instant with them in his preaching, whatever the success was, v. 11. He must go to them of the captivity, who, being in affliction, it was to be hoped would receive instruction; he must look upon them as the children of his house, to whom he had committed the charge, and to whom he therefore ought to have a very tender concern, as Paul for his kinsmen, Rom. ix. 3. And he must tell them not only what the Lord said, but that the Lord said it; let him speak in God's name, and back what he said with his authority; Thus saith the Lord God; tell them so, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear. Not that it may be indifferent to us what success our ministry has, whatever it be, we must go on with our work, and leave the issue to God. We must not say, "Here
are some so good, that we do not need to speak to them," or, "Here are others so bad, that it is no purpose to speak to them;" but, however it be, deliver thy message, faithfully, tell them, the Lord God saith so and so, let them reject it at their peril.

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

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

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

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

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

16. And it came to pass, at the end of seven days, that the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, 17. Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. 18. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thy hand. 19. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but
thou hast delivered thy soul. 20. Again, when a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and lay a stumbling-block before him, he shall die: because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he hath done shall not be remembered; but his blood will I require at thy hand. 21. Nevertheless, if thou warn the righteous man, that the rightous sin not, and he doth sin, he shall surely live, because he is warned. Also thou hast delivered thy soul.

These further instructions God gave to the prophet at the end of seven days, that is, on the seventh day after the vision he had; and it is very probable, that both that and this were on the sabbath-day, which the house of Israel, even in their captivity, observed as well as they could in those circumstances: we do not find that their conquerors and oppressors tied them to any constant service, as their Egyptian taskmasters had formerly done, but that they might observe the sabbath-rest, for a sign to distinguish between them and their neighbours; and for the sabbath-work, they had not the convenience of temple or synagogue, only it should seem they had a river on which they may upon such occasions be furnished with. We must not deny that we have truly communion with God, (1 John i. 3.) though we have it not always so sensibly as at some times. And though the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven may sometimes be looked into, yet ordinarily, it is plain preaching that is most for edification.

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

What is the office to which the prophet is called; Son of man, I have made thee a watchman to the house of Israel, v. 17. The vision he saw astonished him, he knew not what to make of that, and therefore God used this plain comparison, which served better to lead him to the understanding of his work, and so to reconcile him to it. He sat among the captives, and said little, but God comes to him, and tells him that will not do, he is a watchman, and has something to say to them; he is appointed to be as a watchman in the city, to guard against fire, robbers, and disturbers of the peace; as a watchman over the flock, to guard against thieves and beasts of prey; but especially as a watchman in the camp, in an invaded country or a besieged town, that is to watch the motions of the enemy, and to sound an alarm upon the approach, nay, upon the first appearance, of danger. This supposes the house of Israel to be in a military state, and exposed to enemies, who are subtle and restless in their attempts upon; yea, and each of the particular members of that house to be in danger, and concerned to stand upon their guard. Note, Ministers are watchmen on the church's walls, (Isa. lxxiv. 6.) watchmen that go about the city, Cant. iii. 3. It is a toilsome office; watchmen must keep awake, be they ever so sleepy, and keep abroad, be it ever so cold; they must stand all weathers upon the watch-tower, Isa. xxi. 8. Gen. xxxi. 40. It is a dangerous office; sometimes they cannot keep their post, but are in peril of death from the enemy, who gain their point if they kill the sentinel; and yet they dare not quit their post upon pain of death from their general; such a dilemma are the church's watchmen in; men will curse them if they be faithful, and God will curse them if they be false. But it is a needful office; the house of Israel cannot be safe without watchmen, and yet, except the Lord keep it, the watchman waketh but in vain, Ps. cxxvii. 1, 2.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

[6.] That they that turn from sin, and turn to God, are faithful to their trust. If they do not warn sinners of the fatal consequences of sin, but suffer them to go on unreproved, the blood of those that perish through their carelessness, will be required at their hand; it shall be charged upon them in the day of account, that it was owing to their unfaithfulness that such and such perished. If the punishment of sin, as long as they had had fair warning given them, they might have fled in time from the wrath to come? And if it contract so heinous a guilt as this doth to be accessory to the murder of a dying body, what is it to be accessory to the ruin of an immortal soul?

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

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

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

[2.] There is a righteousness which a man may turn from, a seeming righteousness; from which if men turn, there appears that it was not sincere, so passable, may how plausible soever, it was; for if they had been of us, they would have doubt have continued with us, 1 John ii. 19. There are many that begin in the spirit, but end in the flesh; that set their faces heavenward, but look back; that had a first love, but have lost it, and turned from the things of God. 

[3.] When men turn from their righteousness, they soon learn to commit iniquity. When they grow careless and remiss in the duties of God's worship, neglect them, or are negligent in them, they become an easy prey to the tempter. Omissions make way for commissions. 

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Ezekiel went forth into the plain more willingly than he went among them of the captivity; (v. 15.) for fear he might lose them, or they him. But I have showed you his folly, v. 22. We are not now to expect such visions, but, we must own that we have a favour done us no way inferior, if we so by faith behold the glory of the Lord, as to be changed into the same image, by the Spirit of the Lord; and this honour have all his saints. Praise ye the Lord, 2 Cor. iii. 18.

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

23. Go, shut thyself within thy house, v. 24. He was not willing to appear in public, and when he did, the people did not regard him, nor show him the respect he deserved, and, as a just rebuke both to him and them, to him for his shyness of them, and to them for their coldness toward him, God forbids him to appear in public. Note, Our choice is often made our punishment; and it is a righteous thing with God to remove teachers into corners, when they, or their people, or both, grow indifferent to solemn assemblies. Ezekiel was not to shut up himself, some think, to give a sign of the besieging of Jerusalem, in which the people should be closely shut up as he was in his house, and which he speaks of in the next chapter. He must shut himself within his house, that he might receive further discoveries of the mind of God, and might abundantly furnish himself with something to say to the people when he sent abroad. Ezekiel finds that the claims of Judah visited him, and sat before him, sometimes in his house, (ch. viii. 1.) to be witnesses of his ecstasies; but it was not till ch. xi. 25, that he spake to them of the captivity all the things that the Lord had shown him. Note, Those that are called to preach must find time to study, and a great deal of time too, must often shut themselves up in their houses, that they may give attendance to reading and meditation, and so that their profit may appear to all.

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

But when God speaks with him, and designs to speak by him, he will open his mouth, v. 27. Note, Though God's prophets may be silenced awhile, there will come a time when God will give them the opening of the mouth again. And when God
speaks to his ministers, he not only opens their ears to hear what he says, but opens their mouths to return an answer. Moses, who had a veil on his face when he went down to the people, took it off when he went up again to God, Exod. x. 21.

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

CHAP. IV.

Ezekiel was now among the captives in Babylon, but they there had Jerusalem still upon their hearts; the pious captives looked toward it with an eye of faith, (as Du- niel, ch. vi. 10.) the presumptuous ones looked towards it with an eye of pride, and flattened themselves with a conceit that they should shortly return thither again; they that remained corresponded with the captives, and, it is true, buoyed up with hopes of it, would well yet, as long as Jerusalem was standing in its strength; and perhaps uprised those with their folly who had surrendered at first; therefore, to take down this proud conceit, the prophet by his chaps, (v. 6.) vouches for Jerusalem's days to be at hand, a very clear and affecting foresight of the besieging of Jerusalem by the Chaldean army, and the calamities which would attend that siege. Two things are here repre- sented to him in vision. 1. The fortifications that should be raised against the city; this is signified by the prophet's laying siege to the portraiture of Jerusalem, (v. 1-3.) and lying first on one side, and then on the other side, before it, (v. 4.) that should rage within the city; this is signified by his calamities very coarse fare, and confining himself to a little of it, so long as this typical representation lasted, v. 9-17.

1. Thou also, son of man, take thee a tile, and lay it before thee, and pourray upon it the city, even Jerusalem;

2. And lay siege against it, and build a fort against it, and cast a mount against it; set the camp also against it, and set battering-rams against it round about. 3. Moreover, take thou unto thee an iron pan, and set it for a wall of iron between thee and the city, and set thy face against it, and it shall be besieged, and thou shalt lay siege against it. This shall be a sign to the house of Israel.

4. Lie thou also upon thy left side, and lay the iniquity of the house of Israel upon it: according to the number of the days that thou shalt lie upon thee is the number of the years of their iniquity, according to the number of the days three hundred and ninety days: so shalt thou bear the iniquity of the house of Israel. 5. For I have laid upon thee the years of their iniquity, according to the number of the days: three hundred and ninety days: so shalt thou bear the iniquity of the house of Israel. 6. And when thou hast accomplished them, lie again on thy right side, and thou shalt bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days: I have appointed thee each day for a year. 7. Therefore thou shalt set thy face toward the siege of Jerusalem, and thine arm shall be uncovered, and thou shalt prophesy against it.

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

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

I. He was ordered to engrave a draft of Jerusalem upon a tile, v. 1. It was Jerusalem's honour, that while she kept her integrity, God had graven her upon the palms of his hands, (Isa. xlix. 16.) and the names of the tribes were engraved in precious stones on the arm of the Ephod; and what the prophet now does is, he makes the faithfullie city become a harlot, a worthless, brittle tile or brick is thought good enough to pourray it upon. This the prophet must lay before him, that the eye may affect the heart.

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

III. He was ordered to pourray it upon the approach of Pharaoh's army, (Jer. xxxvii. 5-8.) the number of the days of the close siege will be three hundred and ninety. Yet that also had another signification; three hundred and ninety days, according to the prophetical discer, signified three hundred and ninety years; and when the prophet lies so many days on his side, he bears the figure of the age of the city, that, as ten tribes, had borne three hundred and ninety years, reckoning from their first apostasy under Jeroboam to the destruction of Jerusalem, which completed the ruin of those small remains of them that had incorporated with Judah. He is then to lie forty days upon his right side, and so long to bear the iniquity of the house of Judah, the king- dom of the two tribes, because the measure-filling sins of that people were these which they were guilty of during the last forty years before their captivity, since the thirteenth year of Josiah, when Jeremiah began to prophesy, Jer. i. 1. 2. Or, as some reckon it, since the eighteenth, when the book of the law was found, and the people renewed the covenant with God, who persevered in their impieties and idolatries, notwithstanding they had such a prophet, and such a prince, and were brought into the band of such a covenant, what could be expected but ruin without remedy? Ju- dah, that had such helps and advantages for reformation, fills the measure of its iniquity in less time than Israel does. Now we are not to think that the prophet lay constantly night and day with his side; but every day, for so many days together, at a certain time of the day, when he received vis- its, and company came in, he was found lying three hundred and ninety days on his left side, and forty days on his right side, before his portraiture of Jerusalem, which all that saw might easily un
understand to mean the close besieging of that city, and people would be flocking in daily, some for curiosity, and some for conscience, at the hour appointed, to see it, and to make their different remarks upon it.

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

IV. He was ordered to pursue the siege with vigour; (v. 7.) Thou shalt set thy face toward the siege of Jerusalem, as wholly intent upon it, and resolved to carry it; so the Chaldeans would be, and neither bribed nor forced to withdraw from it. Nebuchadnezzar's resentments of Zedekiah's treachery in breaking his league with him, made him very furious in pushing on this siege, that he might clasp the insolence of that faithless prince and people; and this army promised themselves a rich booty of that pommous city, so that both set their faces against it, for they were very resolute. Nor were they less active and industrious, exerting themselves to the utmost in all the operations of the siege, which the prophet was to represent by the uncovering of his arm, or, as some read it, the stretching out of his arm, Ps. i. 13. When God is about to do some great work, he is said to make bare his arm, Isa. iii. 10. In short, the Chaldeans will go about their business, and go on in it, as men in earnest, who resolve to go through with it.

Now, I. This is intended to be a sign to the house of Israel, (v. 3.) both to them in Babylon, who would soon be, and were then so conscious of their sin and wickedness, and of their rejection from God, as to feel a deep concern for the city of their ancestors; and those also who remained in their own land, who would hear the report of it. The prophet was dumb, and could not speak; (ch. iii. 26.) but as his silence had a voice, and upbraided the people with their deafness, so even God then left not himself without witness, but ordered him to make signs, as dumb men used to do, and as Zacharias did when he was dumb; and by them to make known his mind, that is, the mind of God, to the people. And thus likewise the people were upbraided with their stupidity and dullness, that they were not capable of being taught as men of sense are, by words, but must be taught as children are, by pictures, or as deaf men are, by signs. Or, perhaps, they are hereby upbraided with their malice against the prophet: had he spoken in words at length what was signified by those figures, they would have entangled him with it, and talk, would have indicted him for treasonable expressions, for they knew how to make a man an offender for a word; (Isa. xxix. 21.) to avoid which he is ordered to make use of signs. Or, the prophet made use of signs for the same reason that Christ made use of parables, that hearing they might hear, and not understand, and seeing they might see, and understand; (Matt. x. 20.) to show them that they did not understand what was plain, and therefore shall be taught by that which is difficult; and herein the Lord was righteous.

2. Thus the prophet prophesies against Jerusalem; (v. 7.) and there were those who not only understood it so, but were the more affected with it by its being thus represented; for images to the eye commonly make deeper impressions upon the mind than words can; and for this reason sacraments are instituted to represent divine things, that we might see and believe, might see and be affected with those things; and we may expect this benefit by them, and a blessing to go along with them, while (as the prophet here) we make use only of such signs as God himself has expressly appointed, which, we must conclude, are the fittest. Note, The power of imagination, if it be rightly used, and kept under the direction of reason and faith, may be of good use to kindle and excite the affections, as it was here to Ezekiel and his attendants. Metaphors I see so and so, myself dying, time expiring, the world on fire, the dead rising, the great tribunal set, and the like, may have an exceedingly good influence upon us: for fancy is like fire, a good servant, but a bad master.

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

4. All this that the prophet says before the children of his people concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, is designed to bring them to repentance, by showing them sin, the provoking cause of this destruction, sin, the ruin of that once flourishing city, against them that would not turn away from it; he is effectual to make them hate sin, and turn from it; while he thus in lively colours describes the calamity with a great deal of pain and un easiness to himself, he is bearing the iniquity of Israel and Judah: "Look here," (says he,) "and see what work sin makes, what an evil and bitter thing it is to depart from God; this comes of sin, your sin and the sin of your parents; let that therefore be the daily matter of your sorrow and shame now in your captivity, that you may make your peace with God, and he may return in mercy to you." But observe, It is a day of punishment for a year of sin; I have appointed thee each day for a year. The siege is a calamity of three hundred and ninety days, in which God reckons for the iniquity of three hundred and ninety years; justly therefore do they accuse themselves that God had punished them less than they iniquity deserved. Ezra ix. 13. But let impenitent sinners know that though now God is long-suffering toward them, in the other world there is an everlasting punishment. When God laid bands upon the prophet, it was to show them how they were bound with the cords of their own transgression, (Lam. i. 14.) and therefore they were not exempt from the consequence of it.

But we may well think of the prophet's case with compassion, when God laid upon him the bands of duty, as he does on all his ministers, 1 Cor. ix. 16. Necessity is laid upon me, and so unto me if I preach not the gospel; and yet men laid upon him bonds of restraint; (ch. iii. 25.) but under both it is satisfaction enough that they are serving the interests of God's kingdom among men.

9. Take thou also unto thee wheat, and barley, and beans, and lentiles, and millet, and fitches, and put them in one vessel, and make thee bread thereof according to the
number of the days that thou shalt lie upon thy side; three hundred and ninety days shalt thou eat thereof. 10. And thy meat which thou shalt eat shall be by weight, twenty shekels a-day: from time to time shalt thou eat it. 11. Thou shalt drink also water by measure, the sixth part of a hin: from time to time shalt thou drink. 12. And thou shalt eat it as barley-cakes, and thou shalt bake it with dung that cometh out of man, in their sight. 13. And the Lord said, Even thus shall the children of Israel eat their defiled bread among the Gentiles, whither I will drive them. 14. Then said I, Ah Lord God! behold, my soul hath not been polluted; for from my youth up, even till now, have I not eaten of that which dieth of itself, or is torn in pieces; neither came there abominable flesh into my mouth. 15. Then he said unto me, Lo, I have given thee cow’s dung for man’s dung, and thou shalt prepare thy bread therewith. 16. Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, behold, I will break the staff of bread in Jerusalem; and they shall eat bread by weight, and with care; and they shall drink water by measure, and with astonishment: 17. That they may want bread and water, and be ashamed one with another, and consume away for their iniquity. The best exposition of this part of Ezekiel’s prediction of Jerusalem’s desolation is Jeremiah’s lamentation of it, Liam. iv. 3, 4, 8ec. and ch. v. 10, where he pathetically describes the terrible famine that was in Jerusalem during the siege, and the sad effects of it. The prophet here, to effect the people with the foresight of it, must confine himself for 390 days to coarse fare and short commons, and that ill-dressed, for they should want both food and fuel. 1. His meat, for the quality of it, was to be of the worst bread, made of but little wheat and barley, and the rest of beans, and lentiles, and millet, and fitches, such as we feed horses or fatten hogs with, and this mixed, as millet-corn, or as that in the beggar’s bag, that has a dish full of one sort of corn at one house, and of another at another house; of such corn as this must the prophet’s bread be made, while he underwent the fatigue of lying on his side, and needed something better to support him, v. 9. Note, It is our wisdom not to be too fond of dainties and pleasant bread, because we know not what hard meat we may be tied to, nay, and may be glad of, because we may have more than we desire, and therefore must not be despised or wasted, nor must those that use it be looked upon with disdain, because we know not what may be our own lot. 2. For the quantity of it, it was to be of the least that a man could be kept alive with; to signify that the besieged should be reduced to their highest distress, and should hold out till all the bread in the city was spent, Jer. xxxvii. 21. The prophet must eat but twenty shekels weight of bread a day, (v. 10.) that was about ten ounces; and he must drink but the sixth part of a hin of water, that was half a pint, about eight ounces, v. 11. The sum of the Egyptian diet is fourteen ounces of meat, and sixteen of drink. The prophet in Babylon had bread enough and to spare, and was by the river-side, where there was plenty of water; and yet, that he might confirm his own prediction, and be a sign to the children of Israel, God obliges him to live thus sparingly, and he submits to it. Note, God’s servants must learn to endure hardness, and to deny themselves the uses of lawful delights, when they may thereby serve the glory of God, evidence the sincerity of their faith, and express their sympathy with their brethren in affliction. The body must be kept under, and brought into subjection; nature is content with a little, grace with less, but lust with nothing. It is good to stint ourselves of choice, that we may the better value the meat we eat, the water we drink, when we are not stinted by necessity. And in times of public distress and calamity, it ill becomes us to make much of ourselves, as those that drank wine in bowls, and were not grieved for the affliction of Joseph, Amos vi. 4-6. 3. For the dressing of it, he must make it with man’s dung, (v. 12.) that must be dried, and serve for fuel to heat his oven with; the thought of it would almost turn one’s stomach; yet the coarse bread, thus baked, he must eat as barley-cakes, as freely as if it were the same bread he had been used to. This nauseous piece of cookery he must exercise publickly in their sight, that they might be the more affected with the calamity approaching, which was signified by it; that in the extremity of the famine they should not only have to endure all the imbecility, dainty, but nothing that was cleanly, about them; they must take up with what they could get. To the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet. This circumstance of the sign, the baking of his bread with man’s dung, the prophet with submission humbly desired might be dispensed with; (v. 14.) it seemed to have in it something of a ceremonial pollution, he said, that it was a law that man’s dung should be covered with earth, that God might see me eat a clean thing in their camp, Deut. xxviii. 13, 14. And must he go gather a thing so offensive, and use it in the dressing of his meat in the sight of the people? “Ah Lord God,” says he, “behold, my soul hath not been polluted, and I am afraid lest by this it be polluted.” Note, The pollution of the soul by sin is what good people dread more than anything else; yet sometimes tender consciences fear it without cause, and perplex themselves with scruples about lawful things, as the prophet here, who had not yet learned that it is not that which goes into the mouth that defiles the man, Matth. xv. 11. But observe, He does not plead, “Lord, from my youth I have been brought up delicately, and never used to any thing but what was clean and nice;” (and therefore were those who were so brought up, who in the siege of Jerusalem did embrace dunghills, Liam. iv. 5) but that he had been brought up conscientiously, and had never eaten any thing that was forbidden by the law, that died of itself, or was torn in pieces; “And therefore, Lord, do not put this upon me now.” Thus Peter pleaded, (Acts x. 14.) Lord, I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean. Note, It will be comfortable to us, when we are reduced to hardships, if our hearts can witness for us that we have always been careful to abstain from sin, even from little sins, and the appearances of evil. Whatever God commands us, we may be sure is good; but if we be put upon any thing that we are apprehensive it is hurtful, we must put it down against it, from this consideration, that hereby we have preserved our purity, and shall we lose it now? Now, because Ezekiel with a manifest tenderness of conscience made this scruple, God dispensed with him in this manner. Note, Those who have power in their hands, should not be rigorous in pressing their commands upon those that are dissatisfied concerning them, yea, though their dissatisfactions be
groundless, or arising from education and long usage, but should recede from them rather than grieve or offend the weak, or put a stumbling-block before them; in conformity to the example of God's condescension to Ezekiel, though we are sure his authority is incontrovertible, and all his commands wise and good. God allowed Ezekiel to use corn's dunge instead of man's dunge, v. 15. This is an implicit reflection upon man, as intimating that, he being polluted with sin, his filthiness is more nauseous and odious than that of any other creature. How much more abominable and filthy is man! Job xv. 16.

Now this sign is particularly explained here; it signifies, 1.

1. That those who remained in Jerusalem should be brought to extreme misery for want of necessary food; all supplies being cut off by the besiegers, the city would soon find a want of the country, for the king himself is served of the field; and thus the staff of bread would be broken in Jerusalem, v. 16. God would not only take away from the bread its power to nourish, so that they shall eat, and not be satisfied, (Lev. xxvi. 26.) but would take away the bread itself, Isa. iii. 1. So that what little remainder should be eaten by weight, so much a-day, so much a-head, that they might have no equal share, and might make it last as long as possible. But to what purpose when they could not make it last always: and the besieged must be tired out before the besiegers? They shall eat and drink with care, to make it go as far as might be, and with astonishment, without being satisfied; yet they shall have part among them, and be not shut out of the way to look for a recruit. They shall be astonished one with another; whereas it used to be some alleviation of a calamity to have others share with us in it, (Solamen miseriae socios habuisse doloris,) and some case to the spirit to claim of the burthen, it should be an aggravation of the misery, that it was universal, and their complaining to one another should but make them all the more uneasy, and increase the astonishments; and the event shall be as bad as their fears; they cannot make it worse than it is, for they shall consume away for their iniquity; multitudes of them shall die of famine, a lingering death, worse than that by the sword; (Lam. iv. 9.) they shall die so as to feel themselves dead; and it is sin that brings all this misery upon them; They shall consume away for their iniquity; but I will not consume them, (ibid. v. 13.) They shall continue hardened and imperious, and shall die in their sins, which is more miserable than to die on a dunghill.

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

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

2. It signified, that those who were carried into captivity should be forced to eat their defiled bread among the Gentiles, (v. 13.) to eat meat made up by Gentile hands, otherwise than according to the law of the Jewish church, which they were always taught to call defiled, and which they would have, as great an aversion to as a man would have to bread prepared with dung, that is, (as perhaps it may be understood,) kneaded and moulded with dung. Daniel and his fellows confined themselves to pulse and water, rather than they would eat the portion of the king's meat assigned them, because they apprehended they would defile them; (Dan. i. 8.) or, they should be forced to eat the hard meat, such as their oppressors would allow them in their slavery, and such as formerly they would have scorned to touch. Because they served not God with cheerfulness in the abundance of all things, God will make them serve their enemies in the want of all things.

CHAP. V.

In this chapter we have a further, and no less terrible, denunciation of the judgments of God, which were coming with all speed and force upon the Jewish nation, which would utterly ruin it; for when God judges he will come. This destruction of Judah and Jerusalem is here.

1. Presented by a sign, the cutting, and burning, and scattering of hair, v. 1-4. II. That sign is expounded, and applied to Jerusalem. 1. Sin is charged upon Jerusalem as the cause of this desolation, contempt of God's law, (v. 5-7.) and profanation of his sanctuary, v. 11. 2. Wrath is threatened, great wrath, (v. 8-10.) a variety of miseries, (v. 12, 16, 17.) such as should be their reproach and ruin, v. 13-15.

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

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

1. He must shave off the hair of his head and beard, (v. 1.) which signified God's utter rejecting and abandoning of that people, as a useless, worthless generation, such as could well be spared, nay, such as it would be his honour to part with his reward, as one that does not deserve it. In cutting them off were, this sharp knife: and this razor, that were proper to be made use of, and would do execution. Jerusalem had been the head, but, being degenerated, was become as the hair, which, when it grows thick and long, is but a burden which a man wishes to get clean of, as God the sinners in Zion. And I will use me of mine own, Ezek. i. 34. Ezekiel must not cut off that hair only which was superfluous, but cut it all off, denoting the full end that God would make of Jerusalem. The hair that would not be trimmed and kept neat and clean by the admonitions of the pro-
2. He must weigh the hair, and divide it into three parts. This intimates the very exact direction of God's judgments according to equity, (by him men and their actions are weighed in the unerring balance of truth and righteousness,) and the proportion which divine justice observes in punishing some by one judgment and others by another; one way or other, they shall all be met with. Some make the shaving of the hair to denote the loss of their liberty and of their honour; it was looked upon as a mark of ignominy, as in the disgrace Haman put on David's ambassadors; it denotes also the loss of their beauty and ornament. For they shall have their heads upon occasion of great mourning; I may add the loss of their Nazarite-ships, for the shaving of the head was a period to that vow, (Num. vi. 18.) and Jerusalem was now no longer looked upon as a holy city.

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

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

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

We have here the explanation of the foregoing similitude: This is Jerusalem. Thus it is usual in
EZEKIEL. Now the wise was that 25.) to honour in Jerusalem, which by the judgments of God was now to be stripped of all its ornaments, to be emptied of all its inhabitants, and to be naked and had to be invested with the garb that is hired.

2. The head of one that was a priest, a prophet, a holy person, was fittest to represent Jerusalem the holy city. Now the contents of these verses are much the same with what we have often met with, and still shall, in the writings of the prophets. Here we have,

1. The privileges Jerusalem was honoured with; (v. 5.) I have set it in the midst of the nations one country; and I will glory in her, and those, famous nations, and very considerable. Jerusalem was not situated in a remote, obscure corner of the world, far from neighbours, but in the midst of kingdoms that were populous, polite, and civilized, famed for learning, arts, and sciences, and which then made the greatest figure in the world. But there seems to be more in it than this. 1. Jerusalem was set in the midst of the nations, and preferred among them, because she was designed to have a good influence upon the nations and countries round about, as set in the midst of them as a candle upon a candlestick, to spread the light of divine revelation, which she was blessed with, to all the dark corners of the neighboring nations, that from them it might diffuse itself further, even to the ends of the earth. Jerusalem was set in the midst of the nations, to be as the heart in the body, to invigorate this dead world with a divine life, as well as to enlighten this dark world with a divine light, to be an example of everything that was good. The nations that observed what excellent statutes and judgments they had, concluded them to be a wise and understanding people, (Deut. iv. 6.) fit to be consulted as an oracle, as they were in Solomon's time, 1 Kings iv. 34. And they gloried in this reputation, as a right use of it, what a blessing had Jerusalem been to all the nations about! But, failing to be so, the accomplishment of this intention was reserved for its latter days, when out of Zion went forth the go-spell, and the word of the Lord Jesus from Jerusalem, and there repentance and remission began to be preached, and thence the preachers of them went forth hither and thither. And when this was done, Jerusalem was levelled with the ground. Note. When places and persons are made great, it is with design that they may do good, and that those about them may be the better for them; that their light may shine before men.

11. The provocations Jerusalem was guilty of. A very high charge is here drawn up against that city, and proved beyond contradiction sufficient to justify God's taking from her privileges, and putting her under military execution. 1. She had not walked in God's statutes, nor kept his judgments; (v. 7.) may, they had refused his judgments and his statutes, (v. 6.) they did not do their duty, may, they would not, they said that they would not; those statutes and judgments which their neighbours admired, they despised, and which they abhorred, before their face, they cast behind their back. Note, A contempt of the word and law of God opens a door to all manner of iniquity. God's statutes are the terms on which he deals with men; that they refuse his terms, cannot expect his favours. 2. She had changed God's judgments into wickedness, (v. 6.) a very high expression of their profaneness, that they had not only broken God's laws, but had so perverted and abused them, that they had made them the excuse and colour of their wickedness; they introduced into them all imaginable tombs and usages of the heathen, instead of God's institutions; this was changing the truth of God into a lie, (Rem. i. 25.) and the glory of God into shame, Ps. iv. 2. Note, Those that have been well educated, if they live ill, put the highest affront imaginable upon God, as if he were the Patron of sin, and his judgments were turned into wickedness.

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

4. She had not done according to the judgments of the nations; (v. 7.) they had not acted toward their God, though he is the only true God, as the prospects had actuated, and had a pretended connexion, apostatized from it, they are commonly more profane and vicious than those who never made any profession; they have seven other spirits more wicked.

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

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

1. God will take this work of punishing Jerusalem into his own hands; and who knows the power
of his anger, and what a fearful thing it is to fall into his hands! Observe what a strong emphasis is laid upon it, (v. 8.) I, even I, am against thee. God had been for Jerusalem, to defend and save it; but miserable is its case when he is turned to its Enemy, and fights against it. If God be against us, the whole creation is at war with us, and nothing can be for us so as to stand us in any stead; *ye think it is only the Chaldean army that is against you, but they are God's hand, or rather the staff in his hand; it is I, even I, that am against thee; not only to speak against thee by prophets, but to act against thee by providence. I will execute judgments in thee, (v. 10.) in the midst of thee, (v. 11.) in the midst of the city; not only in the borders, but in the bowels of the country." Note, Those who will not observe the judgments of God's mouth, shall not escape the judgments of his hand; and God's judgments, when they come with commission, will penetrate into the midst of a people, will enter into the soul, into the bowels like water, and like oil into the bones; I will execute judgments. Note, God himself undertakes to make a full and just retribution of all; he himself will give an account of himself to none. The world, the flesh, and the devil, shall all be made to give an account of themselves, (Rom. xiv. 12.) there shall be no more reproofs, (v. 13.) with much satisfaction; Mine anger, which has long been witheld, shall now be accomplished, and I will cause my fury to rest upon them; it shall not only light upon them, but lie upon them, and fill them as vessels of wrath fitted by their own wickedness to destruction; and, justice being hereby glorified, I will be comforted. I will be entirely satisfied in what I have done. Mine eye shall not spare, (v. 14.) either, whether I have any pity, v. 11. Divine compassion defers the punishment, or mitigates it, or supports under it, or shortens it, but here is judgment without mercy, wrath without any mixture or alloy of pity. These expressions are thus sharpened and heightened, perhaps with design to look further, to the vengeance of eternal fire, which shall certainly fall upon the whole race of man for their rejection of the salvation of God. These are the descriptions of God's judgments, so terrible and lastingly destructive, to all who will be unwise enough to persist in their sins, and to come one after another, on a large scale, to the judgment, whether they come in the name of religion, or in the name of vice, for the wrath of God is revealed from heaven to light the light of men. Note, Public sins, as they call for public reproofs, (Them that sin rebuke before all,) so, if these prevail not, they call for public judgments. He strikes them as wicked men in the open sight of others, (Job xxxiv. 26.) that he may maintain and vindicate the honour of his government, for (as Grotius descants upon it here,) he would suffer it to be said, See what wicked things they lead others to, and to make the worshippers of the only true God! And as the publicity of the judgments will redound to the honour of God, so it will serve, (1.) To aggravate the punishment, and to make it the more heavy. Jerusalem, being made waste, becomes a reproach among the nations, in the sight of all that pass by, v. 11. The more conspicuous and the more peculiar any have been in the eyes of God, the greater disgrace attends their fall; and that was Jerusalem's case. The more Jerusalem had been a praise in the earth, the more it is now a reproach and a taunt, v. 15. This she was warned of as much as any thing when her glory commenced, (1 Kings ix. 8.) and this was lamented as much as any thing when it was laid in the dust, Lam. ii. 15. (2.) To teach the nations what fear before the God of Israel, when they saw what a jealous God he is, and how severely he punishes sin, even in those that are nearest to him. It shall be an instruction to the nations, v. 15. Jerusalem should have taught her neighbours the fear of God by her piety and virtue, but she not doing that, God will teach it them by her ruin; for they have reason to say, If this be done by the green tree, what shall be done in the dry? when the judgment begin at the house of God, where will it end? If they be thus punished, who only had some idolaters among them, what will become of us who are all idolaters? Note, The destruction of some is designed for the instruction of others. Malactors are publicly punished, in terrorum—those others may take warning. 4. These punishments, in the kind of them, shall be very severe and grievous. (1.) They shall be such as have no precedent or parallel. Their sins being more provoking than those of others, the judgments executed upon them should be uncommon, (v. 9.) I will do in thee that which I have not done in thee before, though you have long since deserved it; not, that which I have not done in any other city. Note, Sins in large cities are going to be greater than that of Sodom, (Lam. iv. 6.) which was the worst of all that went before it; nay, it is such as I will not do any more the like, all the circumstances taken in, to any other city, till the like come to be done again to this city, in its final overthrow by the Romans. This is a rhetorical expression of the most grievous judgments, like that character of Hekeshiah, that there was none like him, before or after him. (2.) They shall be such as will force them to break the strongest bonds of natural affection to one another, which will be a just punishment of them for their wilful breaking of the bonds of their duty to God; (v. 10.) The fathers shall eat the sons, and the sons shall eat the fathers, when the destruction comes upon the whole family, or generation, shall be brought to it by their barbarous conquerors. (3.) There shall be a complication of judgments, any one of them terrible enough, and desolating; but what then would they be when they came all together, and in perfection? Some shall be taken away by the plague; (v. 12.) the pestilence shall pass through thee, (v. 17.) sweeping all before it, as the destroying angel; others shall be consumed with famine, others shall utterly waste away as men in a consumption; (v. 12.) this is again insisted on; (v. 16.) I will send upon them the evil arrows of famine; hunger shall make them pine, and shall pierce them to the heart, as if arrows, evil arrows, poisoned darts were shot into them; God has many arrows, evil arrows, in
given to the prophet and others, the Lord's servants, to fumigate both the iniquities and the calamities of Israel, v. 11 - 14.

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

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

2. That which is threatened in this prophecy, is the utter destruction of the idols and the idolaters, and both by the sword of war. God himself is commander in chief of this expedition against the mountains of Israel; it is he that says, Behold, I, even I, will bring a sword upon you; (v. 2.) the sword of
Chaldeans is at God's command, goes where he sends it, comes where he brings it, and lights as he directs it. In the desolations of that war,

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

2. The worshippers of idols and all their adherents should be destroyed likewise; as all their high places shall be laid waste, so shall all their dwellers be put to death, v. 6. They that profane God's dwelling-place as they had done, can expect no other than that he should abandon theirs, ch. v. 11. If any man defile the temple of God, him will God destroy, 1 Cor. iii. 17. It is here threatened, that their slain shall fall in the midst of them; (v. 7.) there shall be abundance slain, even in those places which were thought most safe; but it is added, as a remarkable circumstance, that they shall fall before their idols, (v. 4.) that their dead carcases shall be laid, and their bones scattered, about their altars, v. 5. [1.] Thus their idols shall be polluted, and those places profaned by the dead bodies, which they had had in veneration. If they will not defile the covering of their graven images, God will, Is. xxx. 21, 22. The throwing of the carcases of dead men upon the dunghill, as upon the dunghill deities that they were but dunghill deities. [2.] Thus it was intimated that they were but dead things, unfit to be rivals with the living God; for the carcases of dead men, that, like them, have eyes and see not, ears and hear not, were the fittest company for them. [3.] Thus the idols were upbraided with their inability to help the worshippers, and idolaters, who had the folly of trusting to them; for, it should seem, they fell by the sword of the enemy then when they were actually before their idols, imploring their aid, and putting themselves under their protection. Senancharib was slain by his sons then when he was worshipping in the house of his god. [4.] The sin might be read in this circumstance to helplness of worship, the slope of the idols before the idols, to show that therefore they are slain, because they worshipped those idols; see Jer. viii. 2. Let the survivors observe it, and take warning not to worship images; let them see it, and know that God is the Lord, that the Lord he is God, and he alone.

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

that escape of you shall remember me among the nations, whether they shall be carried captives, because I am broken with their whorish heart, which hath departed from me, and with their eyes, which go a whoring after their idols: and they shall boaste themselves for the evils which they have committed in all their abominations.

10. And they shall know that I am the Lord, and that I have not said in vain that I would do this evil unto them.

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

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

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

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

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

(1.) They remember the base affront they had put upon God by their idolatries, and this is that which an ingenuous repentance fastens upon, and more effectually than all others. They broke all their golden bowels to idols, and given that honour to pretended deities, the creatures of men's fancies, and the work of men's hands, which they should have given to the God of Israel. They departed from God, from his word, which they should have made their rule; from his work, which they should have made their business; their hearts departed from him. The heart, when it is turned from the right hand, is laid upon, and is given to those bodily exercise profits nothing; the heart, which should be set upon him, and carried out toward him, when that departs from him, is as the treacherous clepeament of a wife from her husband, or the rebellious revolt of a subject from his sovereign. Their eyes also go after their idols; they doted on them, and had great expectations from them. Their hearts followed their eyes in the choice of their gods; they must have gods that they could see, and then their eyes followed their hearts in the adoration of them. Now the malignity of this sin is, that it is spiritual whoredom; it is a whoremish heart that departs from God; and they are eyes that go a whoring after their idols. Note, Idolatry is spiritual whoredom; it is the breach of a marriage contract, and the breaking up of the beauty and excellency of the gift of God, and the indulgence of a base lust, which deceives and defiles the soul, and is a great wrong to God in his honour.

(2.) They remember what a grief this was to him, and how he represented it. They shall remember that I am broken with their whoremish heart, and their eyes that were full of this spiritual adultery; not only they were very desolate at it, but grieved, as a husband is at the levendness of a wife whom he dearly loved, grieved to that degree, that he is broken with it; it breaks his heart to think that he should be so disingenuously dealt with; he is broken as an aged father is with the undutiful behaviour of a rebellious and disobedient son, which shinks his spirits, and makes him to stoop. Forty years long they provoked me with their generations. Ps. cvii. 22. God's measures were broken; so some; a stop was put to the current of his favours toward them, and he was even compelled to punish them. This they shall remember in the day of their repentance, and it shall afflict and humble them more than any thing; not so much that their peace was broke long, but broken, so that God was broken by their sin. Thus they shall look on him whom they have pierced, and shall mourn, Zech. xii. 10. Note, Nothing grieves a true penitent so much as to think that his sin has been a grief to God, and to the Spirit of his grace.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(3.) The country shall be all laid waste, as before the cities; (v. 6.) I will make the land desolate. That fruitful, pleasant, populous country, that has been as the garden of the Lord, the glory of all lands, shall be desolate, more desolate than the wilderness toward Diblah, v. 14. It is called Diblah, lathaim, (Numb. xxxiiii. 46—lviii. 22.) that great and terrible wilderness, which is described, Deut. viii. 15. wherein were fiery serpents and scorpions. The land of Canaan is at this day one of the most barren, desolate countries in the world. City and country are thus desolated, that the altars may be laid waste, and made desolate, v. 6. Rather than their idolatrous altars shall be left standing, both town and country shall be laid in ruins. Sin is a desolating thing; therefore stand in awe, and sin not.

CHAPTER VII.

In this chapter, the approaching ruin of the land of Israel is most particularly foretold, by affecting expressions often repeated, that if possible they might be awakened by repentance to prevent it. The prophet must tell them, V. 2. That it will be a final ruin, a complete, utter destruction, which would make an end of them, a miserable end, v. 1—6. II. That it is an approaching ruin, just at the door, v. 7—10. III. That it is an unavoidable ruin, because they had by sin brought it upon themselves, v. 10—13. IV. That their strength and wealth should be no fence against it, v. 16—19. V. That the temple, which they trusted in, should itself be ruined, v. 20—22. VI. That it should be a universal ruin, the sin that brought it having been universal, v. 23—27.

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

14. They have blown the trumpet, even to make all ready; but none goeth to the battle: for my wrath is upon all the multitude thereof.

15. The sword is without, and the pestilence and the famine within: he that is in the field shall die with the sword; and he that is in the city, famine and pestilence shall devour him.

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

16. An end is come, the end is come, (v. 2.) and again, (v. 3, 6.) *Now is the end come upon thee; the end which all their wickedness had a tendency to, and which God had often told them it would come to at last, when by his prophets he had asked them, What will ye do in the end thereof? The end, which all the foregoing judgments had been working toward, as means to bring it about; their ruin shall now be completed; or, the end, that is, the period of their state, the final destruction of their nation, as the deluge was the end of all flesh, Gen. vi. 13. They had flattered themselves with hopes that they should speedily see an end of their troubles;* "Yea," says God, *An end is come, but a miserable one, not the expected end," (which is promised to the pious remnant among them, Jer. xxix. 11.) *it is the end, that end which you have so often warned of; that last end, which Mic. vi. 15. (v. xxix. 29.) and which because Jerusalem remembered not, therefore she came down wonderfully," Lam. i. 9. This end was long in coming, but now it is come. Though the ruin of sinners comes slowly, it comes surely. *It is come, it watches for thee, ready to receive thee.* This perhaps looks further, to the last destruction of that nation by the Romans, which that by the Chaldeans was an earnest of; and still further, to the final destruction of the world of the ungodly. *The end of all things is at hand; and Jerusalem's last end was a type of the end of the world, Matt. xxiv. 3. O that we could all see that end of time and days very near, and the end of our own time and days much nearer, that we may secure a happy lot in the end of the days! Dan. xii. 13. This end comes upon us from the east of the land, and shall be final, so it shall be total; no part of the land shall escape; no, not that which lies most remote; such will be the destruction of the world be; all these things shall be dissolved; such will the destruction of sinners be; none can avoid it. O that the wickedness of the wicked might come to an end, before it bring them to an end.*

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

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

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

4. *All this comes from God's wrath, not alloyed, as sometimes it has been, with mixtures of mercy, the very same wrath in which all these calamities flow; and this is the wormwood and the gall, in the affliction and the misery, which makes it bitter indeed; (v. 9.) I will send mine anger upon thee. Observe, God is Lord of his anger; it does not break out but when he pleases, nor fasten upon any but as he directs it, and gives it commission. The expression rises higher, (v. 8.) I will send mine anger, and the anger of mine anger, mine anger, all the purposes and all the products of it, upon thee. This wrath does not single out here and there one to be made examples, but it is upon all the multitude thereof;* (v. 12, 14.)
1. The body of the nation is become a vessel of wrath, fitted for destruction. God does sometimes in wrath remember mercy, but now he says, Mine eye shall not spare thee, neither will I have pity, (v. 4.) and again, (v. 9.) They shall have judgment without mercy, who made light of mercy when it was offered them. 

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

Two sins are particularly specified as provoking God to bring these judgments upon them; pride, and oppression. (1.) God will humble them by his judgments, for they have magnified themselves. The rod of affliction has blossomed, but it was pride that budded, v. 10. What buds in sin, will blossom in some judgment or other. The pride of Judah and Jerusalem appeared and was at the height, the pride of the great men of the earth, and the pride of the princes of the people, Isa. xlv. 15. The pride of kings was their destruction, Job xi. 11. (2.) Their enemies shall deal hardly with them, for they have dealt hardly with one another; (v. 11.) Violence is risen up into a rod of wickedness; their injuriousness to one another is protected and patronized by the power of the magistrate. The rod of government became a rod of wickedness; to such a degree of impudence was violence risen up, we saw the place of judgment, that wickedness was there, Ezek. iii. 16. Isa. v. 7. Whatever are the fruits of God's judgments, it is certain that our sins is the root of them.

6. There is no escape from these judgments, nor fence against them, for they shall be universal, and shall bear down all before them, without remedy. God would have no other end in his actions, but triumphantly, both in town and in country, both within the city and without it, v. 15. Men shall be safe no where, for he that is in the field shall die by the sword, every field shall be to them a field of battle; and he that is in the city, though it be a holy city, yet it shall not be his protection, but famine and pestilence shall devour him. Sin had abounded both in cities and in camp, and had spread, as in Troy, throughout all the world. It had its adepts in the East, Trojans and Greeks offended alike; and therefore among both nations are made.

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2. None of those that are marked for death shall escape; there shall none of them remain; none of these proud oppressors that did violence to their poor neighbours with the rod of wickedness, none of them shall be left, but they shall be all swept away by the desolation that is coming; (v. 11.) None of their multitude, of the rabble, whom they set on to do mischief, and to commemorate them in doing it; to make as little as possible of the destruction of any; none of them shall remain, nor any of theirs; their families shall all be destroyed, and neither rest nor branch left them; this multitude, this mob, divine vengeance will in a particular manner lasten upon; for wrath is upon all the multitude thereof; (v. 12, 14.) and the vision was touching the whole multitude thereof; (v. 13.) the bulk of the selveden people. The judgment coming shall carry them away by wholesale, and they shall neither secure them selves nor their masters, whose creatures and tools they were. God's judgments, when they come with commission, cannot be overpowered by multitudes. Though hand join in hand, yet shall not the wicked go unpunished. (v. 11.) Those that fall shall not be lamented; (v. 11.) There shall be no waiting for them, for there shall be none left to bewail them, but such as are hastening space after them. And the times shall be so bad, that men shall rather congratulate than lament the death of their friends, as reckoning those happy that are taken away from seeing those desolations, and sharing in them. Jer. xvi. 4, 5.

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

5. They shall have no hope of the return of their prosperity, with which to support themselves in their adversity; they shall have given up all for gone; and therefore, "Let not the buyer rejoice that he is increasing his estate, and is become a purchaser; nor let the seller mourn that he is lessening his estate, and is become a bankrupt," v. 12. See the vanity of the things of this world, and how worthless they are—that in a time of trouble, when they have no business, God brings the tempests to the least account of them. They that have sold are the more easy, having the less to lose; and they that have bought have but increased their own cares and fears. Because the fashion of this world passes away, let those that buy be as though they possessed not, because they know not how soon they may be despised, 1 Cor. vii. 28. It is added, (v. 13.) They shall be bound together, and be swept away at the last day of jubilee, and to that which is sold, according to the law, though he should escape the sword and pesti-
lence, and live till that year comes; for inheri-
tances shall be enjoyed here, till the seventy years be accomplished, and then men shall return to their possessions, shall claim and have their own again."

In the belief of which, Jeremiah about this time, bought his uncle's field, yet, according to the charge, the buyer did not re-price, but complain, Jer. xxxvii. 23.

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

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

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

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

2. They shall be always solitary, and under prevarication, so that they shall not be in the cities, or places of concourse, but all alone upon the mountains, notcaring for society, but shy of it, as being ashamed of the low circumstances to which they are reduced.

3. They shall be always sorrowful. Those have reason to be so that are under the token of God's displeasure; and God can make those so, that have been most jovial, and have set sorrow at defiance. They that once thought themselves as the lions of the mountains, so daring were they now become as the doves of the valleys, so timid are they, and as dispirited, ready to flee when none pursueth, and to tremble at the shaking of a leaf. They are all of them mourning, not with a godly sorrow, but with the sorrow of the world, which works death, every one for his iniquity, for these calamities which they now see from their iniquity has brought upon them, not only the iniquity of the fathers, but all the iniquity of the fathers shall then be brought to acknowledge what they have each of them contributed to the national guilt. Note, Sooner or later sin will have sorrow of one kind or other; and those that will not repent of their iniquity may justly be left to pine away in it; those that will not mourn for it as it is an offence to God, shall be made to mourn for it as it is a shame and ruin to themselves; a man is known at the last, when the flesh and the body are consumed, and to say, How have I hated instruction! Prov. v. 11.

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

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

11. They shall have no benefit from their wealth and riches, but shall be perfectly sick of them, v. 19. They that were reduced to this distress, were such as had had abundance of silver and gold, money, and plate, and jewels, and other valuable goods; from which they promised themselves a great deal of advantage in times of public trouble; they thought it would be their strong city, that with it they could bribe enemies and buy friends, that it would be the ransom of their lives, and that they could never be in want; but they had been deceived, and that money would answer all things: but see how it proved; 1. It had been a great temptation to them in the day of their prosperity; they set their affections upon it, and put their confidence in it; by their eager pursuit of it they were drawn into sin, and by their plentiful enjoyment of it they were hardened in sin; and thus it was the stumbling-block of their prosperity. It occasionally had thrown them into sin, and obstructed their return to God. Note, There are many whose wealth is their snare and ruin: the gaining of the world is the losing of their souls, it makes them proud, secure, covetous, oppressive, voluptuous; and that which, if well used, might have been the servant of their piety, being abused, becomes the stumbling-block of their prosperity. It occasionally has thrown them into sin, and obstructed their return to God.
strong, that they cannot conquer them. There is a day of wrath coming, when it will appear that money is a faithful servant, but will not do them any service. What the better was the rich man for his full barns, when his soul was required of him; or that other rich man for his purple, and scarlet, and sumptuous fare, when in hell he could not procure a drop of water to cool his tongue? Money is no defence against the arrest of death, nor any alleviation to the miseries of the dead, even in the lowest regions. [25] They cannot give them any content under their calamities. [1.] They could not fill their bowels; when there was no bread left in the city, none to be had for love or money, their silver and gold could not satisfy their hunger, nor serve to make one meal's meat for them. Note, We could better be without mines of gold than fields of corn; the products of the earth, which may easily be gathered from the surface of it, are much greater blessings to mankind than its treasures, which are with so much difficulty and hazard digged out of its bowels. If God give us daily bread, we have reason to be thankful, and no reason to complain, though silver and gold we have none. [2.] Much less could they satisfy their souls, or yield them any inward comfort. Note, The wealth of this world hath not been found to answer the desires of the soul, or be any satisfaction to it in a day of distress. He that loves silver shall not be satisfied with silver, much less he that loses it. (3.) Their gold and silver shall be thrown into the streets, either by the hands of the enemy, who shall have more spoil than they care for, or can carry away; silver shall be nothing accounted of, they shall cast that in the streets; but the gold, which is more valuable, shall be removed, and brought to Babylon; or, they themselves shall throw away their silver and gold, either because it would be an encumbrance to them, and retard their flight, or because it would expose them, and be a temptation to the enemy to cut their throats for their money; or in indignation at it, because they found that after all the care and pains they had taken to scrape it together and hide it up, they found it would stand them in no stead, but do them a mischief rather. Note, The world passes away, and the lust thereof, 1 John ii. 17. The time may come when worldly men will be as weary of their wealth as now they are wedded to it, when those fairest that have least.

II. God's temple shall stand in no stead.

20. 22. This they had prided themselves in, and promised themselves security from; (Jer. vii. 4. Mic. iii. 11.) but this confidence of theirs shall fail them. Observe, 1. The great honour God had done to that people in setting up his sanctuary among them; (v. 20.) As for the beauty of his ornament, that holy and beautiful house, where they and their fathers worshiped God (Is. lxiv. 1.) which was therefore beautiful because holy. It was called the beauty of holiness, and that is the beauty of its ornament; it was also adorned with gold and gifts; as for this, he set it in majesty, every thing was contrived to make it magnificent, that it might help to make the people of Israel the more illustrious among their neighbours. He built his sanctuary and his temple. It was a glorious high throne from the beginning, Jer. xvii. 12. But, 2. Here is the great dishonour they had done to God in profaning his sanctuary; they made the images of their counterfeit deities, which they set up in rivalry with God, and which are here called their abominations, and their detestable things, (for they were to God, and so they should have been to men,) and these they set up. in God's temple, than which a greater affront could not be put upon him. And therefore, 3. It is here threatened that they shall be deprived of the temple; and it shall be no succour to them, Therefore have I set my face against them; and it is out of the reach of their services, and they shall be of the reach of its influences. Note, God's ordinances, and the privileges of a profession of religion, will justly be taken away from those that despise and profane them. Nay, they shall not only be kept at a distance from the temple, but the temple itself shall be involved in the common desolation; (v. 21.) the Chaldeans, who are strangers, have no veneration for it, who are the wicked of the earth, and therefore have an antipathy to it, shall have it for a prey and for a spoil; all the ornaments and treasures of it shall fall into their hands, who will make no difference between that and other plunder. This was a grief to the saints in Zion, who complained of nothing so much as of that which the enemy did wickedly in the sanctuary; (Ps. lix.) it was the punishment of the sinners in Zion, who by profaning the temple with strange gods, provoked God to suffer it to be profaned by strange nations, and to turn his face from them that did it, as if he had not seen them and their crimes; and from them that deprecated it, as not regarding them and their prayers. Let the soldiers do as they please; let them enter into the sacred place, into the holy of holies, as robbers, let them strip it, let them pollute it, its defence is departed, and then farewell all its glory. Note, Those are unworthy to be honoured with the form of godliness, who will not be governed by the power of godliness.

23. Make a chain; for the land is full of bloody crimes, the city is full of violence.

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

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

II. The indictment drawn up against the prisoner; The land is full of bloody crimes, (full of the judgments of blood, so the word is,) of the guilt of blood which they had shed, under the colour of justice and by forms of law, with the solemnity of a judgment. The inexcusable blood which Manasseh
shed, probably thus shed, by the judgment of the blood, was the measure-filling sin of Jerusalem, 2 Kings xxiv. 4. Or, It is full of such crimes as by the law were to be punished with death, the judgment of blood; idolatry, blasphemy, witchcraft, sodomy, and the like, were bloody crimes, for which particular sinners were to die; and therefore when they were become national, there was no remedy but the nation must be cut off. Note, Bloody crimes will be punished with bloody judgments. The city, the city of David, the holy city, that should have been the pattern of righteousness, the protector of it, and the punisher of wrong, is now full of violence; the rulers of that city, having greater power and reputation, are greater oppressors than any others. This was sadly to be lamented. How is the Cities of Refuge to be thus deserted by their guests! 15, 16. Since they had walked in the way of the heathen, and done worse than they, God would bring the worst of the heathen upon them to destroy them and lay them waste, the most barbarous and outrageous, that have the least compassion to mankind, and the greatest antipathy to the Jews. Note, Of the heathen some are worse than other, and God sometimes picks out the worst to be a scourge to his own people, because he intends them for the fire when the work is done. 2. That since they had filled their houses with goods unjustly gotten, and used their pomp and power for the crushing and oppressing of the weak, God would give their houses to be possessed, and all the furniture of them to be enjoyed, by strangers, and make the pomp of the strong to cease, so that their great men should not dazzle the eyes of the weak-sighted with their pomp, nor with their might at any time prevail against right, as they had done. 3. That since they had defiled the holy places with their idolatries, God would defile them with his judgments; since they had set up the images of other gods in the temple, God would remove thence the tokens of the presence of his own God. When the holy places are desecrated by their god, they will suffer diversely by the enemies of their enemies. 4. Since they had followed one sin with another, God would pursue them with one judgment upon another; Destruction comes, utter destruction. (v. 25.) For there shall come mischief upon mischief to ruin you, and rumour upon rumour to frighten you; like the waves in a storm, one upon the neck of another. Note, Sinners that are marked for ruin shall be prosecuted to it, for God will overcome with his judgments. 5. Since they had disappointed God’s expectations from them, he would disappoint their expectations from him. For, (1.) They shall not have the deliverance out of their troubles that they expect. They shall seek peace; they desire it, and pray for it, they shall endeavour it, and expect it, but there shall be more; their attempts both to court their enemies, and to conquer them, shall be in vain, and their troubles shall grow worse and worse. (2.) They shall not have the direction in the trouble that they expect; (v. 26.) They shall seek a vision of the prophet, shall desire, for their support under their troubles, to be assured of a happy issue out of them; they did not desire a vision to remove them for this purpose, but to warn them of danger, or to give them deliverance; such messages they longed to hear; but the law shall perish from the priest, he shall have no words either of counsel or comfort to say to them; they would not hear what God had to say to them by way of conviction, and therefore he has nothing to say to them by way of encouragement. Counsel shall perish from the ancients; the elders of the people that should advise them what to do in this difficult juncture, shall be infatuated and at their wits’ end. It is bad with a people when those that should be their counsellors, know not how to consider within themselves, consult with one another, or counsel them. 6. Since they had animated and encouraged one another to sin, God would dispirit and dishearten them all, so that they should not be able to make head against the judgments of God that were breaking in upon them. All orders and degrees of men shall lie down by consent under the load; (v. 27.) The king, that should inspire life into them, and the prince, that should head them on to attack the enemy, they shall mourn, and be clothed with desolation, their heads and hearts shall fail, their politics and their courage; and then no wonder if the hands of the people of the land, that should fight for them, be troubled; none of the men of might shall find their hands. What can men contrive or do for themselves when God is departed from them, and appears against them? All orders needs be in tears, all in trouble, when God comes to judge them according to their deserts, and so make them know, to their cost, that he is the Lord, the God to whom vengeance belongs.

CHAP. VIII.

God, having given the prophet a clear foresight of the people’s miseries that were hastening on, here gives him a clear insight into the people’s wickedness, by which God was provoked to bring those miseries upon them; that he might justify God in all his judgments, might the more particularly make evident the truth, and with the more satisfaction foretell their ruin. Here God, in vision, brings him to Jerusalem, to show him the sins that were committed there, though God had begun to contend with them; (v. 1., 4.) and there he sees, 1. The image of jealousy set up at the gate of the altar, v. 5, 6. 11. The elders of Israel worshipping all manner of images in a secret chamber, v. 7., 12. 11. The women weeping for Tamouro, v. 13, 14. 14. The men worshipping the sun, v. 15, 16. And then appeals to him whether such a provoking people should have any pity shown them, v. 17, 18.

1. And it came to pass in the sixth year, in the sixth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I sat in my house, and the elders of Judah sat before me, that the hand of the Lord God fell there upon me. 2. Then I beheld, and, lo, a likeness as the appearance of fire: from the appearance of his loins, even downward, fire; and from his loins, even upward, as the appearance of brightness, as the colour of amber. 3. And he put forth the form of a hand, and took me by the lock of my head, and the spirit lifted me up between the earth and the heaven, and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem, to the door of the inner gate that looketh toward the north, where was the seat of the image of jealousy, which provoketh to jealousy. 4. And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel was there, according to the vision that I saw in the plain. 5. Then said he unto me, Son of man, lift up thine eyes now the way toward the north. So I lifted up mine eyes
the way toward the north, and behold, northward at the gate of the altar, this image of jealousy in the entry. 6. He said furthermore unio me, Son of man, set thou what they do? even the great abominations that the house of Israel committed here, that I should go far off from my sanctuary! But turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations.

Ezekiel was now in Babylon; but the messages of wrath he had delivered in the foregoing chapters were not now pursuing him. He now begins to trouble thereof the captives locked upon themselves to have peace or trouble; and therefore here he has a vision of what was done at Jerusalem, and this vision is continued to the close of the 11th chapter.

1. Here is the date of this vision. The first vision he had was in the fifth year of the captivity, in the fourth month, and the fifth day of the month, ch. 1. 2. This was just four years after. Perhaps it was after he had lain 390 days on his left side, to bear the iniquity of Israel, and before he began the forty days on his right side, to bear the iniquity of Judah, for now he was sitting in the house, not lying. Note, God keeps a particular account of the messages he sends to us, because he would only call us to account about them, as it were, so that we may more easily be answerable for them.

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

1. The prophet is himself sitting in his house, in a sedate, composed frame; deep perhaps in contemplation. Note, The more we retreat from the world, and retire into our own hearts, the better frame we are in for communion with God: they that sit in the house of God, and do not let it be said that they have been taught more. Or, He sat in his house, ready to preach to the company that resorted to him, but waiting for instructions what to say. God will communicate more knowledge to those who are communicative of what they do know.

2. The elders of Judah, that were now in captivity, were sitting with him. It is probable that it was on the sabbath-day, and that it was usual for them to attend on the prophet every sabbath-day, both to hear the word from him, and to join with him in prayer and praise: and how could they spend the sabbath better, now that they had neither temple nor synagogue, priest nor altar? It was a great mercy that they had opportunity to spend it so well, last there lived the image of God, 2 Kings iv. 23. But some think it was on some extraordinary occasion that they attended him, to inquire of the Lord, and sat down at his feet to hear his word. Observe here, (1.) When the law was perished from the priests at Jerusalem, whose lips should keep knowledge, (ch. vii. 26.) they in Babylon had a prophet out of the land, and did not place or pay him anything. (2.) Note that the elders of Judah were in captivity, they paid more respect to God's prophets, and his word in their mouth, than they did when they lived in peace in their own land. When God brings men into the cords of affliction, then he opens their ears to discipline, Job xxxvi. 8, 10. Ps. cxxii. 6. Those that despised vision in the valley of dry bones, that sat and looked, Faber goes, and said that we are a dunghill people, and the words of the Lord was precious, and there was no open vision. (3.) When our teachers are driven into corners, and are forced to preach in private houses, we must diligently attend them there. A minister's house should be a church for all his neighbours. St. Paul preached in his own hired house at Rome, and God ordered him, there was no man forbidden, that he might have the hand of the Lord fell there upon me. God's hand took hold of him, and arrested him, as it were, to employ him in this vision, but at the same time supported him to bear it.

IV. The vision that the prophet saw: (v. 2.) he beheld a likeness of a man, we may suppose; for that was the likeness he saw before, but it was all brightness above the girdle, and all fire below; fire and flame. This agrees with the description we had before of the appearance he saw; (ch. i. 27.) it is probable that it was the same Person, the Man Christ Jesus. It is probable that the elders that sat with him, (as the men that journeyed with Paul,) saw a light, and were afraid, and this happy sight they gained by attending the prophet in a private place, and an instinct view of him that spoke to him, Acts xxii. 9.

V. The prophet's remove, in vision, to Jerusalem. The appearance he saw, put forth the form of a hand, which took him by the lock of his head, and the Spirit was that hand which was put forth, for the Spirit of God is called the Finger of God. Or, The spirit within him lifted him up, so that he was borne up and carried on by an internal principle, not an external violence. A faithful servant of God will be drawn by a hair, by the least inclination of the divine will, to his duty, for he has that within him which inclines him to a compliance with it, Ps. xxvii. 8. He was miraculously lifted up between heaven and earth, as if he were to fly away upon angels' wings, while he had the following visions, whether in the body or out of the body, we may suppose, he could not tell, any more than Paul in a like case, much less can we. But the Spirit of God revealed the acts of God and the communications of divine light, that by divine grace are raised up above the earth and the things of it, to be out of their attractive force. But being lifted up toward heaven, he was carried in vision to Jerusalem, and to God's sanctuary there; for those that would go to heaven, must take that by their way. The Spirit represented to his mind the city of Jerusalem, as Christ represented, so Govern's thinks,) the elders that sat with him saw: they were witnesses of the hand taking him by the lock of hair, and lifting him up, and then perhaps laying him down again in a trance or ecstasy, while he had the following visions, whether in the body or out of the body, we may suppose, he could not tell, any more than Paul in a like case, much less can we. But the Spirit of God revealed the acts of God and the communications of divine light, that by divine grace are raised up above the earth and the things of it, to be out of their attractive force.

VI. The discoveries that were made to him there.

1. There he saw the glory of God; (v. 4.) Behold, the glory of the God of Israel was there, the glory of the appearance of the living creatures, and the wheels, and the throne, that he had seen, ch. i. Note, God's servants, wherever they are, and withhersoever they go, ought to carry about them a believing regard to the glory of God, and to set that at always before them: and those that have seen God's power and glory in the sanctuary, should desire to see it again, so as they have seen it, Ps. lxxi. 9. For if we know that there is glory of God, both to give credit to, and to put honour upon, the following discoveries. But it seems to have a further intention here; it was to aggravate this sin of Israel, in changing their own God, the God of Israel, (who is a God of so much glory as here he appears to be,) for dunghill gods,andalready, from the appearance of the living creatures, and the wheels, and the throne, that we more gloriously we see God to be, the more odious we shall see sin to be, especially idolatry, which turns his truth into a lie, his glory into shame. It was also to aggravate their approaching misery, when this glory of the Lord should remove from them, (ch. xi. 23.) and leave the house and city desolate.

2. There he saw the reproach of Israel— and that was the image of jealousy, set northward, at
the gate of the altar, v. 3, 5. What image this was, is uncertain probably, an image of God, or of the grove, which Manasseh made, and set in the temple, (2 Kings xxv. 7. 2 Chron. xxxv. 17.) And Josiah removed his groves, and did that which was right in the sight of the Lord; and see they probably did the chariots of the sun, which he found at the entering in of the house of the Lord; (2 Kings xxii. 11.) and this is here said to be in the entry. But the prophet, instead of telling us what image it was, which might gratify our curiosity, tells us that it was the image of jealousy, to convince our consciences that, whatever image it was, it was the greatest defilement to God, and provoked him to jealousy; he represented it as a husband would resent the whoresoms of his wife, and would certainly revenge it; for God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth, Nah. i. 3. The very setting up of this image in the house of the Lord was enough to provoke him to jealousy; for it is in the matters of his worship that we are particularly told, The Lord thy God am a jealous God. They that placed this image at the door of the inner gate, where the people assembled, called the gate of the altar, (v. 5.) thereby plainly intended, (1.) To afront God, to provoke him to his face, by advancing an idol to be a rival with him for the adorations of his people, in contempt of his law, and in defiance of his justice. (2.) To debauch the people, and pick them up as they were entering into the courts of the Lord's house, to bring their offerings to him, and to tempt them to offer them to this image; like the adulteress Sodom describes, that sits at the door of her house, to call passengers who go right on their ways, Whoso is simple, let him turn in, and his sister, Prov. ix. 14. With good reason therefore is this called the image of jealousy.

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

7. And he brought me to the door of the court; and when I looked, behold, a hole in the wall. 8. Then said he unto me, Son of man, dig now in the wall; and when I had dug in the wall, behold, a door. 9. And he said unto me, Go in, and behold the wicked abominations that they do here. 10. So I went in and saw; and, behold, every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, pourtrayed upon the wall round about, 11. And there stood before them seventy men of the ancients of the house of Israel, and in the midst of them stood Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan, with every man his censer in his hand; and a thick cloud of incense went up. 12. Then said he unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery? for they say, The Lord seeth us not; the Lord hath forsaken the earth.

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

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

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

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

3. What the remark is, that is made up to it; (v. 12.) Son of man, art thou seeing this? Couldst thou have imagined that there was such wickedness committed? It is here observed concerning it, (1.) That it was done in the dark; for sinful works are works of darkness. They concealed it, lest they should lose their places, or at least their credit. There is a great deal of secret wickedness in the world, which the day will declare; the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God. (2.) That this one whose chapel was but a specimen of many like; here they met together, to worship their images in concert; but, it should seem, they had every man his chamber of his imagery besides, a room in his own house for this purpose, in which every man gratified his own fancy with such pictures as he liked best. Idolaters had their household gods, and their family-worship of them in private, which is a shame to those who call themselves Christians, and yet have no church in their house, no worship of God in their family. Had they chambers of imagery, and shall not we have chambers of devotion? (3.) That atheism was at the bottom of their idolatry. They worship images in the dark, the images of the gods of other nations, and they say, Jehovah, Jehovah, of the house of Israel, whom thou knowest not, Jehovah, Jehovah, thou never seest; Jehovah, Jehovah, thou art forsaken, and we worship what God will, we regard us not." [1.] They think themselves out of God's sight; they say, The Lord seeth us not. They imagined, because the matter was carried on so closely, that men could not discover it, nor did any of their neighbours suspect them to beworshippers; whereas their God is omnipresent, and sees all things, as if there were any darkness, or shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves. Note, A practical disbelief of God's omniscience is at the bottom of our treacherous departure from him; but the church argues right, as to this very sin of idolatry, (Ps. xlv. 20.) If we have forgotten the name of our God, and stretched forth our hand to a strange god, shall not God search this out? No doubt, he shall. [2.] They think themselves out of God's care; "The Lord has forsaken the earth, and looks not after the affairs of it; and thus we may as well worship any other god as him." Or, He has forsaken our land, and left it to be a prey to its enemies; and therefore it is time for us to look out for some other god, to whom to commit the protection of it; our one God cannot, or will not, deliver us; and therefore let us have many." This was a blasphemous reflection upon God, as if he had forsaken them first, else they would not have forsaken him. Note, Those are ripe indeed for ruin, who are arrived at such a pitch of impiety as to lay the blame of their sins upon God himself.

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

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

Now the abominations here discovered were, 1. Women weeping for Tammuz, v. 14. An abominable thing indeed, that any should choose rather to serve an idol in tears than to serve the true God with joyfulness and gladness of heart! Yet such absurdities as these are guilty of, who
follow after lying vanities, and forsake their own mercies. Some think it was for Adonis, an idol among the Greeks, others for Osiris, an idol of the Egyptians, that they shed these tears. The image, they say, was made to weep, and then the worshippers wept with it. They bewailed the death of this Tammar, and rejoiced in its returning to life again. These mourning women sat at the door of the gate of the Lord's house, and there shed their idolatrous tears, as it were in defiance of God and the sacred rites of his worship; and some think, with their idolatry, prostrating themselves also to corporal whoredom; for these two, commonly went together; and they that dishonoured the divine nature were exercised with abominations and a reprobate sense, to dishonour the human nature, which no where ever sunk so far below itself as in these idolatrous rites.

2. Men worshipping the sun, v. 16. And this was so much the greater an abomination, that it was practised in the inner court of the Lord's house, at the door of the temple of the Lord, between the porch and the altar; there, where the most sacred rites of the holy religion were to be performed, was this abominable wickedness committed: justly might God in jealousy say to those who thus affronted him at his own door, as the king to Haman, Will he force the queen also before me in the house? Here were about twenty-five men giving that honour to the sun which is due to God only; some think they were the king and his princes; it should rather seem, from what is said after, that they were some of the priests, and the proper place to find them in. They that were intrusted with the true religion, had it committed to their care, and were charged with the custody of it, they were the men that betrayed it. (1.) They turned their back toward the temple of the Lord, resolvedly forgetting it, and designingly slipping it, and putting contempt upon it. No. With the men turn their backs upon God's institutions, and despise them, it is no marvel if they wander endlessly after their own inventions. Iniquity is the beginning of idolatry and all iniquity. (2.) They turned their faces toward the east, and worshipped the sun, the rising sun. This was an ancient instance of idolatry; it is mentioned in Job's time, (Job xxxii. 26.) and had been generally practised among the nations. Some worshipped the sun under the mistaken notion that God made to be a servant to the universe; (for such the sun is, and so his name Shemesh signifies, Deut. iv. 19.) and in adoring the borrowed light, and despising the Father of lights! 11. The inference drawn from these discoveries; (v. 17.) "Hast thou seen this, O son of man, and couldst thou have thought ever to see such things, that as God, and as a lord, a Lord, God made to be a servant to the universe; for such the sun is, and so his name Shemesh signifies, Deut. iv. 19.) and in adoring the borrowed light, and despising the Father of lights?"

1. He cried also in mine ears with a loud voice, saying, Cause them that have charge over the city to draw near, even every man with his destroying weapon in the land with violence. It is not strange if they that wrong God thus, make no conscience of wronging one another, and with all that is sacred trampled likewise upon all that is just. And their wickedness in their conversations made even the worship they paid to their god an abomination; (Isa. 1. 11, &c.) "They fill the land with violence, and they return to the temple to provoke me to anger there; for there they sacrifice, instead of making an atonement, do but add to their guilt; they return to provoke me, (they repeat the provocation, do it, and do it again,) and lo, they put the branch to their nose;" a proverbial expression, denoting perhaps their scoffing at God, and having him in derision; they smelted at his service, as men do when they put a branch to their nose. Or, it was some custom used by idolaters in honour of the idols they served. We read of garlands used in their idolatrous worship, (Acts xiv. 13.) cut of which every zealot took a branch, which they smelted to a nosegay. Dr. Lightfoot (Hor. Heb. in Joh. xv. 6.) gives another sense of this place; They put the branch to their throats, or to his throat, as the Massorites read it; they are still bringing more fuel (such as the withered branches of the vine) to the fire of divine wrath, which they have already kindled, as if that wrath did not burn hot enough already. Or, putting the branch to the nose may signify the giving of a very great affront and provocation either to God or man; they are an abusive generation of men.

2. He could not be contented with that: they shall be utterly cut off. Therefore, because they have thus furiously bent upon sin, I will also deal in fury with them, v. 18. They filled the land with their violence, and God will fill it with the violence of their enemies; and he will not lend a favourable ear to the suggestions, either, (1.) Of his own pity; Mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity; repentance shall be hid from his eyes; or, (2.) Of their prayers; Though they cry in mine ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them; for still their sins cry louder for vengeance than their prayers cry for mercy. God will now be as deaf to their prayers as their own idols were, on whom they cried aloud, but in vain, I Kings xviii. 26. Time was when God was ready to have heard even before they cried, and to answer while they were yet speaking; but now they shall not be heard, and God will not regard. Prov. 28. It is not the loud voice, but the upright heart, that God will regard.

CHAP. IX.

The prophet had, in vision, seen the wickedness that was committed at Jerusalem, in the foregoing chapter, and we may be sure that it was not represented to him worse than really it was; now here follows, of course, a representation of their ruin approaching; for when sin goes before, it leads to destruction, and is a step toward the making of instruments that were to be employed in the destruction of the city, v. 1. 2. II. The removal of the Shechinah from the cherubim to the threshold of the temple, v. 3. The idolaters give place to those who are employed, who is distinguished from the rest, for the marking of a remnant to be preserved from the common destruction, v. 3. 4. IV. The warrant signed for the execution of those that were not marked, and the execution begun accordingly, v. 5.: 7. V. The prophet's intercession for the mitigation of the sentence, and a denial of any mitigation, the decree being now gone forth, v. 8. Then he employs himself to mark the pious remnant of what he had done in that matter, v. 11. And this shows a usual method of Providence in the government of the world.

1. H
each of the principal gates of Jerusalem. Two destroying angels were sent against Sodom, but six against Jerusalem, when Jehovah’s house in that city shall be burned. The angel’s rebuke will be three times as heavy as that of Sodom. There is an angel watching at every gate to destroy, to bring in judgments from every quarter, and to take heed that none escape. One angel served to destroy the first-born of Egypt, and the camp of the Assyrians, but here are six. In the Revelation we find seven, that were to pour out the vials of God’s wrath, Rev. 15. 6. Then it appeared, with every one a slaughter-weapon in his hand, prepared for the work to which they were called. The nations of which the king of Babylon’s army was composed, which some reckon to be six, and the commanders of his army, (of whom six are named as principal, Jer. xxxix. 3.) may be called the slaughter-weapons in the hands of the angels. The angels are thoroughly finished for every service.

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

III. The notice taken of one among the destroying angels distinguished in his habit from the rest, from whom some favour might be expected; it should seem, he was not one of the six, but among them, to see that mercy might be mixed with judgment, v. 2. This man was clothed with linen, as the priests were, and he had a writer’s ink-horn hung at his girdle, and a small sword, and seven plashmerclers had, which he was to make use of, as the other six were to make use of their destroying weapons. Here the honours of the pen exceeded those of the sword; they were angels that bore the sword, but he was the Lord of angels that made use of the writer’s ink-horn; for it is generally agreed, among the best interpreters, that this man represented Christ the Mediator, as such as the interpreters of the text called him, Rev. xiv. 6 from the flaming sword of divine justice. He is our High Priest, clothed with holiness, for that was signified by the fine linen, Rev. xix. 8. As Prophet, he wears the writer’s ink-horn—the book of life is the Lamb’s book; the great things of the law and gospel which God has written to us, are of his writing; for it is the Spirit of Christ, in the writers of the prophetic script, and the angels in the writings of the revelation of Jesus Christ. Note, It is a matter of great comfort to all good Christians, that, in the midst of the destroyers and the destructions that are abroad, there is a Mediator, a great High Priest, who has an interest in heaven, and whom saints on earth have an interest in.

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

V. The charge given to the man clothed in linen to remain from the house of the priests, v. 4. Now observe,

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

2. The distinguishing care taken of them. Orders were given them all about them, and are of such a pious, public spirit; "Go through the midst of the city in quest of them, and though they are ever so much dispersed, and ever so closely hid from the fury of their persecutors, yet see that you discover them, and set a mark upon their foreheads." (1.) To signify that God has sworn them for his, and he will confess them another day. A work of grace in the soul of these, (ch. iii. 8.) and a mark upon them all, and a mark which shall acknowledge as his mark, and by which he knows them that are his. (2.) To give to them who are thus marked an assurance of God's favour, that they may know it themselves; and the comfort of knowing it will be the most powerful support and cordial in calamitous times. Why should we perplex ourselves about this temporal life, if we know by the mark that we have eternal life? (5.) To be a direction to the servants whom to pass by, as the blood upon the door-posts was an indication that it was an Israelite's house, and the first-born their guilt off, for slain. Note, To keep ourselves pure in times of common iniquity, God will keep safe in times of common calamity. They that distinguish themselves shall be distinguished; they that cry for other men's sins shall not need to cry for their own afflictions; for they shall be either delivered from them, or comforted under them. God will set a mark upon his mourners, will both bless them, and bless them. The sealing of the servants of God in their foreheads, (Rev. vii. 3.) was the same token of the care God has of his own people with this here; only this was to secure them from being destroyed, that from being seduced, which is equivalent.

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

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

1. They are ordered to destroy all, (1.) Without exception; they must go through the city, and smite; they must slay utterly, slay to destruction, give them no time to repent. They must mark none by distinction of age or sex, but cut off old and young, neither the beauty of the virgins, nor the innocency of their babes, shall secure them. This was fulfilled in the death of multitudes by famine and pestilence, especially by the sword of the Chaldeans, as far as the military execution went. Sometimes even such bloody work as this has been God's work. But what an evil thing is sin then, which provokes the
God of infinite mercy to such severity! (2.) Without exception; Let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity; (v. 5.) you must not save any whom God has doomed to destruction, as Saul did Agag and the Amalekites, that is doing the work of God deceitfully, Jer. xlviii. 10. None need to be more fearful than God; and he had said, (ch. viiil. 18.) Man eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity. Note, Those that live in sin, and hate to be reformed, will perish in sin, and deserve not to be pitied; for they might easily have prevented the ruin, and would not.

2. They are warned not to do the least hurt to them that were marked for salvation; "Come not near them; for the Lord God of Israel hath touched them." For though they did not take care to send them judgments, the dubs of the priests, who were the poisoning of the springs, to which all the corruption of the streams was owing. The wickedness of the sanctuary was of all other most offensive to God, and therefore there the slaughter must begin; "Begin there, to try if the people will take warning by the judgments of God upon their priests, and will repent and begin there, that all the world may see and know that he that offendeth against Jahweh, is a jealous God, and hateth sin most in those that are nearest to him." Note, When judgments are abroad, they commonly begin at the house of God, 1 Pet. iv. 17. You only have I known, and therefore will I punish you, Amos iii. 2. God's temple is a sanctuary, a refuge and protection for penitent sinners, but not for any that go on still in their trespasses; neither the nearness of the place, nor the eminency of their place in it, will be their security. It should seem, the destroyers made some difficulty of putting men to death in the temple, but God bids them not hesitate at that, but, (v. 7.) Defile the house, and fill the courts with the slain. This was foretold from the dividing of Judah and Jerusalem by the law, Ezek. xxiv. 14.) but think to secure themselves by keeping hold of the horns of it, like Job, and therefore, like him, let them die there, 1 Kings ii. 30, 31. There the blood of one of God's prophets had been shed, (Matth. xxiii. 35.) and therefore there let their blood be shed. Note, If the servants of God's house defile it with their impurities, God will cleave to the same with one of it to defile it with their violences, Ps. lxix. 1. But these acts of necessary justice were really, whatever they were ceremonially, rather a purification than a pollutions of the sanctuary; it was putting away evil from among them.

4. They were appointed to go forth into the city, v. 6, 7. Note, Wherever sin has gone before, judgment will follow after: and though judgment begins at the house of God, yet it shall not end there. The holy city shall no more be a protection to the wicked people than the holy house was to the wicked priests. II. Here is execution done accordingly. They observed their orders, and, 1. They began at the elders, i.e. ancient men that were before the house, and slew them first, either those seventy ancients who worshipped idols in their chambers, (ch. viii. 12.) or those twenty-five who worshipped the sun between the porch and the altar, who might more properly be said to be before the house. Note, Ringleaders in sin may expect to be first met with by the judgments of God; and the sins of those who are in the house, even to the head, are not hid from God, nor from the most exemplary punishments. 2. They proceeded to the common people; They went forth, and slew in the city; for when the decree is gone forth, there shall be no delay; if God begin, he will make an end. III. Here is the prophet's intercession for a mitigation of the judgment, and a reproof for some; (v. 8.) While they were slaying them, and I was left, I fell upon my face. Observe here, 1. How sensible the prophet was of God's mercy to him, in that he was spared, when so many round about him were cut off. Thousands fell on his right hand, and on his left, and yet the destruction did not come nigh him; only with his eyes did he behold the just reward of the wicked, Ps. xci. 8. He speaks as if he apprehended that, whether they should destroy him or not, few would be spared, and this would be his great calamity. Observe how he improved this reflecting it to God's goodness, not his own deserts. Note, The best saints must acknowledge themselves indebted to sparing mercy that they are not consumed. And when desolating judgments are abroad, and multitudes fall by them, it ought to be accounted a great favour if we have our lives given us for a prey; for we might justly have perished with them that perish. 2. Observe how he improved this, by addressing it to God's goodness, not his own deserts. Note, The best saints must acknowledge themselves indebted to sparing mercy that they are not consumed. And when desolating judgments are abroad, and multitudes fall by them, it ought to be accounted a great favour if we have our lives given us for a prey; for we might justly have perished with them that perish. 3. Observe how he improved this, by addressing it to God's goodness, not his own deserts. Note, The best saints must acknowledge themselves indebted to sparing mercy that they are not consumed. And when desolating judgments are abroad, and multitudes fall by them, it ought to be accounted a great favour if we have our lives given us for a prey; for we might justly have perished with them that perish. 3. Observe how he improved this, by addressing it to God's goodness, not his own deserts. Note, The best saints must acknowledge themselves indebted to sparing mercy that they are not consumed. And when desolating judgments are abroad, and multitudes fall by them, it ought to be accounted a great favour if we have our lives given us for a prey; for we might justly have perished with them that perish. 3. Observe how he improved this, by addressing it to God's goodness, not his own deserts. Note, The best saints must acknowledge themselves indebted to sparing mercy that they are not consumed. And when desolating judgments are abroad, and multitudes fall by them, it ought to be accounted a great favour if we have our lives given us for a prey; for we might justly have perished with them that perish. 3. Observe how he improved this, by addressing it to God's goodness, not his own deserts. Note, The best saints must acknowledge themselves indebted to sparing mercy that they are not consumed. And when desolating judgments are abroad, and multitudes fall by them, it ought to be accounted a great favour if we have our lives given us for a prey; for we might justly have perished with them that perish.
1. Then I looked, and, behold, in the firmament that was above the head of the cherubims there appeared over them as it were a sapphire-stone, as the appearance of the likeness of a throne.

2. And he spake unto the man clothed with linen, and said, Go in between the wheels, even under the cherub, and fill thy hand with coals of fire from between the cherubims, and scatter them over the city. And he went in in my sight.

3. Now the cherubims stood on the right side of the house when the man went in; and the cloud filled the inner court. 4. Then the glory of the Lord went up from the cherub, and stood over the threshold of the house; and the house was filled with the cloud, and the court was full of the brightness of the Lord's glory.

5. And the sound of the cherubims' wings was heard even to the outer court, as the voice of the Almighty God when he spake.

6. And it came to pass, that when he had commanded the man clothed with linen, saying, Take fire from between the wheels, from between the cherubims; then he went in, and stood beside the wheels.

7. And one cherub stretched forth his hand from between the cherubims unto the fire that was between the cherubims; and took thereof, and put it into the hands of him that was clothed with linen; who took it, and went out.

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

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

1. He is here in the firmament above the head of the cherubins, v. 1. He manifests his glory in the upper world, where purity and brightness are both in perfection; and the vast expanse of the firmament aims to speak the God that dwells there infinite.

2. It is the firmament of his house, and his respect to his temple, where he beholds all the children of men.

3. The divine nature infinitely transcends the angelical nature, and God is above the head of the cherubins, in respect not only of his dignity above them, but of his dominion over them. Cherubins have great power and wisdom and influence, but they are subject to God and Christ.

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

3. Here he is attended with a glorious train of holy angels. When God came into his temple, the
cherubim stood on the right side of the house, (v. 3.) as the Prince's life-guard attending the gate of his palace. Christ has angels at command. The orders given to all the angels of God are, to worship him. Some observe, that they stood on the right side of the house, that is, the south side, because on the north side the image of jealousy was, and other instances of idolatry, from which they would place themselves opposite; but this must be.

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

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

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

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

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

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

4. One of the cherubim reached him a handful of fire from the midst of the living creatures. The prophet, when he first saw this vision, observed that there were burning coals of fire, and lamps, but none was among the living creatures; (Ez. i. 13.) from thence this fire was taken, and being called, he said, Lo, I come; this commandment he had received of his Father, and he complied with it; the prophet saw him go in, v. 2. The spirit of burning, the refiner's fire, by which Christ purifies his church, is of a divine original. It is by a celestial fire, fire from between the cherubim, that wonders are wrought. The cherub in put it into his hand; for the angels are ready to be employed by the Lord Jesus, and to serve all his purposes.

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

8. And there appeared in the cherubims the form of a man's hand under their wings. 9. And when I looked, behold, the four wheels by the cherubims, one wheel by one cherub, and another wheel by another cherub: and the appearance of the wheels was as the colour of a beryl-stone. 10. And as for their appearances, they four had one likeness, as if a wheel had been in the midst of a wheel. 11. When they went, they went upon their four sides; they turned not as they went, but to the place whither the
head looked they followed it; they turned not as they went. 12. And their whole body, and their backs, and their hands, and their wings, and the wheels, were full of eyes round about, even the wheels, that they four had. 13. As for the wheels, it was cried unto them in my hearing, O wheel!

14. And every one had four faces: the first face was the face of a cherub, and the second face was the face of a man, and the third the face of a lion, and the fourth the face of an eagle. 15. And the cherubims were lifted up. This is the living creature that I saw by the river of Chebar. 16. And when the cherubims went, the wheels went by them; and when the cherubims lifted up their wings, to mount up from the earth, the same wheels also turned not from beside them. 17. When they stood, these stood; and when they were lifted up, these lifted up themselves also: for the spirit of the living creature was in them. 18. Then the glory of the Lord departed from off the threshold of the house, and stood over the cherubims. 19. And the cherubims lifted up their wings, and mount up from the earth in my sight: when they went out, the wheels also were beside them; and every one stood at the door of the east gate of the Lord's house; and the glory of the God of Israel was over them above. 20. This is the living creature that I saw under the God of Israel, by the river of Chebar; and I knew that they were the cherubims. 21. Every one had four faces apiece, and every one four wings; and the likeness of the hands of a man was under their wings. 22. And the likeness of their faces was the same faces which I saw by the river of Chebar, their appearances and themselves: they went every one straight forward.

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

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

Ezekiel here sees the operations of Divine Providence in the government of the lower world, and the affairs of it, represented by the four wheels; and the perfections of the holy angels, the inhabitants of the upper world, and their ministrations, represented by the four living creatures, every one of which had four faces: the agency of the angels in directing the affairs of this world is represented by the close communication that was between the living creatures and the wheels, the wheels being guided by them in all their motions, as the chariot is by him that drives it; but the same Spirit being both in the living creatures and in the wheels, denotes that infinite wisdom which serves its own purposes by the ministration of angels, and all the occurrences of this lower world. So that this vision gives us fifth view of that throne, which the Lord has prepared in the heavens, to represent the kingdom of his which rules over all, Ps. cliii. 19.

The prophet observes, that this was the same vision with that he saw by the river of Chebar; (v. 13, 22.) and yet in one thing there seems to be a material difference, that that which was there the face of an ox, and was on the left side, (ch. 1. 10.) here they were a cherub, and is the first face, (v. 14.) whence some have concluded that the face of a cherub was that of an ox, which the Israelites had an eye to when they made the golden calf. I rather think that in this latter vision the first face was the proper appearance or figure of a cherub, which Ezekiel knew very well, being a priest, by what he had seen in the temple of the Lord, (2 Kings vi. 2.) but which we now have no certainty of at all; and by this Ezekiel knew assuredly, whereas before he only conjectured it, that they were all cherubims, though putting on different faces, v. 20.

And this first appearing in the proper figure of a cherub, and yet it being proper to retain the number of four, that of the ox is left out and dropped, because the face of the cherubim had been most usual by the worship of an ox. As sometimes when God appeared to Israel, he appeared to them when he appeared to depart from them, he rode upon a cherub, and did fly. Now observe here,

1. That this world is subject to turns and changes, and various revolutions: the course of affairs in it is represented by wheels, (v. 9.) sometimes one spoke is uppermost, and sometimes another, they are still rolling and flowing like the sea, waxing and waning like the moon, 1 Sam. iv. 8. &c. So their appearance is as if there were a wheel in the midst of a wheel, (v. 10.) which intimates the mutual references of providences to each other, their dependences on each other, and the joint tendency of all to one common end, while their motions as to us are intricate and perplexed, and seemingly contrary.

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

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

4. That God makes more use of the ministration of angels in the government of this lower world than we are aware of. The four wheels were by the cherubims, one wheel by one cherub, and another wheel by another cherub, v. 9. What has been imagined by some concerning the spheres above, that every orb has its intelligence to guide it, is here intimated concerning the wheels below, that every
wheel has its cherub to guide it. We think it a satisfaction to us, if under the wise God there are wise men employed in managing the affairs of kingdoms and churches; whether there be or no, it appears by this that there are wise angels employed, a cherub to every wheel.

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

II. Ezekiel sees the glory of God removing out of the sanctuary, the place where God's honour had long dwelt, and this sight is as sad as the other was grateful. It was pleasant to see that God had not forsaken the earth, (as the idlers suggested, ch. ix. 9.) but sad to see that he was forsaking his sanctuary. The glory of the Lord stood over the threshold, v. 4. But now it departed from off the threshold, having thence given the necessary orders for the destruction of the city, and stood over the cherubims, not those in the most holy place, but those that Ezekiel saw. v. 10. And immediately the cherubims lifted up their wings, (v. 19.) as they were directed, and they mounted up from the earth, as birds upon the wing; and when they went out, the wheels of this chariot were not drawn, but went by instinct, beside them; by which it appeared, that so the Spirit of the living creatures were in the wheels. Thus when God is leaving a people in displeasure, angels above, and all events here below, shall concur to further his departure. But observe here, In the courts of the temple where the people of Israel had dishonoured their God, had cast off his yoke, and withdrawn the shoulder from it; blessed angels appear very ready to serve him, to draw his chariot, and to take him forward. And God had shown the prophet how the will of God was disobeied by men on earth; (ch. viii.) here he shows him how readily it is obeyed by angels and inferior creatures; and it is a comfort to us, when we grieve for the wickedness of the wicked, to think how his angels do his commandments, heartening to the voice of his word, Ps. ciii. 20.

Let us now, 1. Take a view of this chariot in which the glory of the God of Israel rides triunphant. He that is the God of Israel, is the God of heaven and earth, and has the command of all the powers of both. Let the faithful Israelites comfort themselves with this, that he who is their God is above the cherubims; their Redeemer is so, (1 Pet. iii. 22.) and has the sole and sovereign disposal of all events, the living creatures and the wheels agree to serve him, so that he is Head over all things to the church. The Rabins call this vision that Ezekiel had, Merobaab, the vision of the chariot; and from thence they call the more abstract part of divinity, which treats concerning God and spirits, Opus curris—The work of the chariot, as they do the other part that is more plain and familiar, Opus beredah—The work of the creation. 2. Let us attend the motions of this chariot; The cherubins, and the glory of God above them, stood at the door of the east gate of the Lord's house, ready to depart and leave the house, v. 19. But observe with how many stops and pauses God departs, as loath to go, as if to see if there be any that will intercede with him to return. None of the priests in the inner court, between the temple and the altar, would court his stay; therefore he leaves their court, and stands at the east gate, which led into the court of the people, to see if any of them would yet at length stand in the gap. Note, God removes by degrees from a provoking people; and, when he is ready to depart, would return to them, if they were but a repenting, praying people.

CHAP. XI.
This chapter concludes the vision which Ezekiel saw, and this part of it furnishes him with two messages: 1. A message of wrath against those who continued still at Jerusalem, and were there in the height of presumption, thinking they should never fall, v. 1, 19. 2. A message of comfort to those who were carried captive into Babylon, and were there in the depth of despondency, thinking they should never rise. And as the former are assured that God has judgments in store for them, notwithstanding their present security; so the latter are assured that God has mercy in store for them, notwithstanding their present distress, v. 14., 21. And so the glory of God removes further, v. 22, 23. The vision disappears, (v. 24.) and Ezekiel faithfully gives his hearers an account of it, v. 25.

1. Moreover, the spirit lifted me up, and brought me unto the east gate of the Lord's house, which looketh eastward: and, behold, at the door of the gate five and twenty men; among whom I saw Jaazaniah the son of Azan, and Pelatiah the son of Benaiah, princes of the people. 2. Then said he unto me, Son of man, these are the men that devise mischief, and give wicked counsel, in this city; 3. Which say, It is not near: let us build houses: this city is the caldron, and we be the flesh. 4. Therefore prophesy against them, prophesy, O son of man. 5. And the Spirit of the Lord fell upon me, and said unto me Speak; Thus saith the Lord, Thus have ye said, O house of Israel: for I know the things that come into your mind, every one of them. 6. Ye have multiplied your slain in this city, and ye have filled the streets thereof with the slain. 7. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Your slain, whom ye have laid in the midst of it, they are the flesh, and this city is the caldron; but I will bring you forth out of the midst of it. 8. Ye have feared the sword; and I will bring a sword upon you, saith the Lord God. 9. And I will bring you out of the midst thereof, and deliver you into the hands of strangers, and will execute judgments among you. 10. Ye shall fall by the sword: I will judge you in the border of Israel and ye shall know that I am the Lord. 11. This city shall not be your caldron, neither shall ye be the flesh in the midst thereof: but I will judge you in the border of Israel. 12. And ye shall know that I am the Lord: for ye have not walked in my statutes, neither executed my judgments, but have done after the manners of the heathen that
are bound about you. 13. And it came to pass, when I prophesied, that Pelatiah, the son of Benanah, died: then fell I down upon my face, and cried with a loud voice, and said, Ah Lord God! wilt thou make a full end of the remnant of Israel?

We have here,

I. The great security of the princes of Jerusalem, notwithstanding the judgments of God that were upon them. The prophet was brought, in vision, to the gate of the temple where these princes sat in counsel upon the present arduous affairs of the city; The Spirit lifted me up, and brought me to the east gate of the city, and beheld, twenty-five men were there. See how obsequious the prophet was to the Spirit's orders, and how observant of all the discoveries that were made to him. It should seem, these twenty-five men were not the same with these twenty-five whom he saw at the door of the temple, worshipping toward the east; (ch. viii. 16.) these seem to have been priests or Levites, for they were between the porch and the altar; and these, though they were at the door of the Lord's house, had no other cause to try causes, (Jer. xxvi. 16.) and these here are charged, not with corruptions in worship, but mal-administration to the government; two of them are named, because they were the most leading, active men, and perhaps because the prophet knew them, though he had been some years absent; Pelatiah, and Juarzimuth, not that mentioned, ch. viii. 11. for he is sure of his recognition. Some tell us that Jerusalem was divided into twenty-four wards, and that these were the governors or aldermen of those wards, with their mayor or president. Now observe,

1. The general character which God gives of these men to the prophet; (v. 2.) These are the men that devise mischief; under pretence of concerting measures for the public safety, they harder people in their sins, and take off their fear of God's judgments which they are threatened with by the prophets; they give wicked counsel in this city, counselling them to restrain and silence the prophets, to rebel against the king of Babylon, and to resolve upon holding the city out to the last extremity.

Note, It is bad with a people when the things that have been hid in their bosoms, and have been deeply engraved in the eyes of those who are intrusted with their counsels. And when mischief is done, God knows at whose door to lay it, and, in the day of discovery and recompense, will be sure to lay it at the right door, and will say, These are the men that devised it, though they are great men, and pass for wise men, and must not now be contradicted or controlled.

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

Now if the destruction is not near, they conclude, Let us build houses; let us count upon a continuance, for this city is the caldron, and we are the flesh. This seems to be a proverbial expression, signifying no more than this, "We are as safe in this city as flesh in a boiling pot; the walls of the city shall be to us as walls of brass, and shall receive no more damage from the besiegers about it, than the caldron does from the fire under it. Those that think to save us on the city's security, shall find it to be as much at their peril as it would be to put themselves to take out of the caldron while it was in seething; (as we find, 1 Sam. ii. 13, 14.) and then it intimates that they were more secure because Jerusalem was the holy city, and they thought themselves a holy people in it, not to be meddled with. Some think this was a banter upon Jeremiah, who in one of his first visions saw Jerusalem a repulsive city, as he saw it in the visions of his heart before it came; and now "Now," say they, in a way of jest and ridicule, "if it be a seething pot, we are as the flesh in it, and who dares meddle with us?" Thus they continued mocking the messengers of the Lord, even while they suffered for so doing; but be ye not mockers, lest your bands be made strong. Those hearts are hard indeed, which are made more secret by the present continuance of God which were designed for warning to them.

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

1. Let them know that the God of heaven takes notice of their vain confidences with which they support themselves; (v. 5.) "I know the things that come into your minds, every one of them, what secret reasons you have for these resolutions, and what you aim at in your project so near a last moment, matter you know to be bad." Note, God perfectly knows not only the things that come out of our mouths, but the things that come into our minds;
not only all we say, but all we think; even those thoughts that are most suddenly darted into our minds, and that as suddenly slip out of them again, so that we ourselves are scarcely aware of them, yet God knows them; he knows us better than we know ourselves; he understands our thoughts afar off: the consideration of this should oblige us to keep our hearts with all diligence, that no vain thing may enter into us, or evil thinkings be rooted in our minds.

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

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

4. Let them know that when God has got them out of the midst of Jerusalem, he will pursue them with his judgments wherever he finds them; the judgments which they thought to shelter themselves from by keeping close in Jerusalem. They feared the sword if they should go out to the Chaldeans, and therefore would abide in their caldron But, says God, I will bring a sword upon you, v. 8. and you shall fall by the sword, v. 10. Note, The fear of the wicked shall come upon him. And there is no fence against the judgments of God when they come with such force, that not in their own strength they were afraid of trusting to the mercy of strangers. "But," says God, "I will deliver you into the hands of strangers, whose remembrances shall feel, since you were not willing to lie at their mercy." See Jer. xxxviii. 17, 18. They thought to escape the judgments of God, but God says that he will execute judgments upon them; and whereas they reminded Ezekiel of what he had prophesied in Jerusalem, God tells them, v. 10. and again, v. 11. that he will judge them in the borders of Israel, which was fulfilled when Nebuchadnezzar slew all the nobles of Judah at Riblah in the land of Hamath, on the utmost border of the land of Canaan. Note, Those who have taken ever so deep root in the place where they live, cannot be sure that that place they shall die.

5. Let them know that all this is the due punishment of their sin, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God against them; Ye shall know that I am the Lord, v. 10. and again, v. 12. Those shall have no shame, or other kind of comfort, when God shall not be feared. And if he would not be taught by his word, what a hatred he has to sin, and what a fearful thing it is for impenitent sinners to fall into his hands. I will execute judgments, and then you shall know that I am the Lord, for the Lord is known by the judgments which he executes upon those that have not walked in his statutes. Hereby it is known that he made the law, because he punishes the breach of it. I will execute judgments among you, (says God,) because you have not executed my judgments, v. 12. Note, The executing of the judgments of God's mouth by us, in a uniform, steady course of obedience to his law, is the only way to prevent the executing of the judgments of his hand upon us, in our ruin and confusion; one way or other, God's judgments will be executed; the worst of them will not be rescued out of it in its precept or in its penalty. If we do not give honour to God by executing his judgments as he has commanded, he will get him honour upon us by executing his judgments as he has threatened; and thus we shall know that he is the Lord, the sovereign Lord of all, that will not be mocked. And observe, When they cast off God's statutes, and walked not in them, they did after the manners of the nations that were round about them, and introduced into their worship all their impure, ridiculous, and barbarous usages. When men leave the settled rule of divine institutions, they wander endlessly. Justly therefore was this made the reason why they should keep God's ordinances, that they might not commit the abominable customs of the heathen. Lev. xvii. 30.

III. This, this awakening word is immediately here followed by an awakening providence, v. 13. Where we may observe, 1. With what power Ezekiel prophesied, or, rather, what a divine power went along with it; It came to pass, when I prophesied, that Pelatiah the son of Benaiath died; he was mentioned, v. 1. as a principal man among the twenty-five princes that made the multitude of the city of Jerusalem. It should seem, this was done in vision now, as the slaying of the ancient men, (ch. ix. 6.) upon occasion of which Ezekiel prayed, (v. 8.) as he did here; but it was an assurance that when this prophecy should be published, it should be done in fact. The death of Pelatiah was an earnest of the complete accomplishment of this prophecy. Note, God is pleased oftentimes to single out some sinners, and make them monuments of his justice, for warning others of what is coming; and some that thought themselves very safe, are snatched away suddenly, and drop down dead in an instant, as Annas and Sapphira at Peter's feet when he prophesied.

2. With what pite Ezekiel prayed. Though the sudden death of Pelatiah was a confirmation of Ezekiel's prophecy, yet, though it was a sufficient proof to them, yet he was in deep concern about it, and laid it to heart as if he had been his relation or friend. He fell on his face, and cried with a loud voice, as one in earnest; "Ah Lord God! wilt thou make a full end of the remnant of Israel? Many are swept away by the judgments we have been under; and shall the remnant which have escaped the sword, the dusky by the immediate hand of God? Then will thou indeed make a full end." Perhaps it was Ezekiel's infirmity to bewail the death of this wicked prince thus, as it was Samuel's to murmur so long for Saul; but thus he showed how far he was from de-
siring the woful day he foretold. David lamented the sickness of those that hated and persecuted him. And we ought to be much affected with the sudden death of others, yea, though they are wicked.

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

Prophecy was designed to exalt every valley, as well as to bring low every mountain and hill; (Isa. xl. 4.) and prophets were to speak not only conviction to the presumptuous and secure, but comfort to the despised and despising that trembled at God's word. The prophet, having in the former part of this chapter received instructions for the awakening of those that were at ease in Zion, is in these verses furnished with comfortable words for those that mourned in Babylon, and by the rivers there sat weeping when they remembered Zion. Observe, 1. How the pious captives were tranquilled upon and insulted over by those who continued in Jerusalem, p. 15. God tells the prophet what the inhabitants of Jerusalem said of him and the rest of them that were already carried away to Babylon. God had owned them as good figs, and declared it was for their good that he had sent them into Babylon; but the inhabitants of Jerusalem abandoned them, supposing them that were really the best saints to be the greatest sinners of all men that dwelt in Jerusalem. Observe, 2. How they are described: They are thy brethren, (says God to the prophet,) whom thou hast a concern and affection for; they are the men of thy kindred; (the men of thy redemption, so the word is;) thy next of kin, to whom the right of redeeming the alienated possession belongs, but who are so far from being able to do it, that they are themselves gone into captivity. They are the whole house of Israel; God so accounts of them, because they only have retained their integrity, and are bettered by their captivity. They are not only of the same family and nation with Ezekiel, but of the same spirit; they were his hearers, and he had communion with them in holy ordinances; and perhaps upon that account they are called his brethren, and the men of his kindred. 2. How they were disowned by the inhabitants of Jerusalem; they said of them, Get ye far from the Lord. They that did not cast them off already, turned from them that were humbled and under humbling provinences. (1.) They cut them off from being members of their church; because they had separated themselves from their rulers, and in compliance with the will of God had surrendered themselves to the king of Babylon, they excoriated them, and said, Get ye far from the Lord, we will not have these men to dwell among us. (2.) They were superstitious; they were very willing to shake off those who were conscientious, and were severe in their censorships of those and sentences against them, as if they were forsaken and forgotten of the Lord, and were cut off from the communion of the faithful. (2.) They cut them off from being members of the commonwealth too, as if they had no longer any part in it; in the matter, "Unto us this land given in possession, as by lot, have ye for ever assigned," they were surrendering to the king of Babylon, and we are thereby become entitled to them." God takes notice of, and is much displeased with, the contempt which those that are in prosperity put upon their brethren that are in affliction.

11. The gracious promises which God made to them in consideration of the insincere conduct of their brethren and kinsmen, and that they had cast them out, said, Let the Lord be glorified; but he shall appear to their joy, Isa. lxvi. 5. God owns that his hand was gone out against them, which had given occasion to their brethren to triumph over them; (p. 16.) "It is true, I have cast them far off among the heathen, and scattered them among the countries; they look as if they were an abandoned people, and so mingled with the nations that they would be lost among them; but I have mercy in store for them." Note, God takes occasion from the contempt which are put upon his people to speak comfort to them; as David hoped God would reward him good for Shimei's cursing. His time to support his people's hopes is, when their enemies are endeavouring to drive them to despair. Now God promises, 1. That he will make up to them the want of the temple and the privileges of it; (p. 16.) I will be to them as a little sanctuary, in the countries where they shall come. They at Jerusalem have the temple, but without God; they in Babylon have God, though without the temple. (1.) God will be a sanctuary to them, a place of refuge; to him they shall flee, and in him they shall be safe, as he was then, and as his people shall be whenever they return to their own land. (2.) They shall have such communion with God in the land of their captivity, as it was thought could be had nowhere but in the temple: they shall there see God's power and his glory, so as they used to see it in the sanctuary; they shall have the tokens of God's presence with them, and his grace in their hearts shall sanctify their prayers and praises, as as usual the temple, and shall be the occasion that they shall please the Lord better than an ox or bullock. (2.) He will be a little sanctuary, not seen or observed by their enemies, who looked with an evil and an envious eye upon that house at Jerusalem which was high and great, 1 Kings ix. 8. They were but few and mean, and a little sanctuary was fittest for them. God regards the low estate of his people, and suits his favours to their circumstances. Observe the confessions of divine grace; the great God will be to his people a little sanctuary.
Note. They that are deprived of the benefit of public ordinances, if it be not their own fault, may have the want of them abundantly made up in the immediate communications of divine grace and comforts.

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

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

4. That God would powerfully dispose them to the use of the law; they shall not only cease to do evil, but they shall learn to do well; because there shall be not only an end of their troubles, but a return to their peace. (1.) God will plant good principles in them; he will make the tree good, v. 19. This is a gospel promise, and is made good to all those whom God designs for the heavenly Canaan; for God prepares all for heaven whom he has prepared here for. It is promised, [1.] That God will give them one heart, a heart entire for the true God, and not divided as it had been among many gods; a heart firmly fixed and resolved for God, and not wavering; steady and uniform, and not inconsistent with itself. One heart is a sincere and upright heart, its intentions of a piece with its professions. [2.] That he will first give them to us, and then will give unto them, that is, will give them so as to be agreeable to the new circumstances into which God in his providence would bring them. All that are sanctified have a new spirit, quite different from what it was; they act from new principles, walk by new rules, and aim at new ends. A new name, or a new face, will not serve without a new spirit. If we can be in Christ, he is a new creature. [3.] That he will take away the stony heart out of their flesh, out of their corrupt nature. Their hearts shall no longer be, as they have been, dead and dry, and hard and heavy, as a stone; no longer incapable of bearing good fruit, so that the good seed is lost upon it, as it was on the stony ground. [4.] That he will give them a heart of flesh, not dead or proud flesh, but living flesh; he will make their hearts sensible of spiritual pains and spiritual pleasures; will make them tender, and apt to receive impressions; this is God's work, it is his gift, his gift by promise; and a wonderful and happy change it is that is wrought by it, from death to life. This is promised to those whom God would bring back to their own land; for them such a change of condition is for the better indeed, when it is accompanied with such a change of the heart; and such a change must be wrought in all those that shall be brought to the better country, that is, the heavenly.

20. Their practices shall be consonant to these principles; I will give them a new spirit, not that they may be able to discourse well of religion, nor to dispute for it, but that they may walk in my statutes, in their whole conversation, and keep mine ordinances in all acts of religious worship, v. 20. These two must go together; and these, to whom God has given a new heart and a new spirit, will make conscience of both; and then they shall be my people, and I will be their God. The ancient covenant, which seems to have been broken, and forgotten, shall be renewed. By their idolatry, it should seem, they had cast God off, by their captivity, it should seem, God had cast them off; but when they were cured of their idolatry, and delivered out of their captivity, God and his Israel own one another again. God, by his good work in them, will make them his people; and then, by the tokens of his good will toward them, he will show that he is their God.

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

22. Then did the cherubims lift up their wings, and the wheels beside them; and the glory of the God of Israel was over them above. 23. And the glory of the Lord went up from the midst of the city, and stood upon the mountain which is on the east side of the city. 24. Afterwards the spirit took me up, and brought me in vision by the Spirit of God into Chaldea,
them of the captivity: so the vision that I had seen went up from me. 25. Then I spake unto them of the captivity all the things that the Lord had shewed me.

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

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

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

4. The words which he gave to his hearers of all he had seen and heard, v. 25. He received, that he might give, and he was faithful to him that appointed him: he delivered his message very honestly; he spake all that, and that only, which God had shewed him: he told them of the great wickedness he had seen at Jerusalem, and the ruin that was hastening toward that city, that they might not repent of their surrendering themselves to the king of Babylon, as Jeremiah advised them, and blame themselves for it, nor envy those that stayed behind, and laughed at them for going when they did, nor suppose a sign of God's favour in captivity. Who would covet to be in a city so full of sin, and so near to ruin? It is better to be in Babylon under the favour of God, than in Jerusalem under his wrath and curse. But though this was delivered immediately to them of the captivity, yet we may suppose that they sent the contents of it to them at Jerusalem, with whom they kept up a correspondence, and told them it had been for Jerusalem, if she had taken the warning hereby given.

CHAP. XII.

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

1. THE word of the Lord also came unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, thou dwellest in the midst of a rebellious house, which have eyes to see, and see not; they have ears to hear, and hear not: for they are a rebellious house. 3. Therefore, thou son of man, prepare thee stuff for removing, and remove by day in their sight; and thou shalt remove from thy place to another place in their sight: it may be they will consider, though they be a rebellious house. 4. Then shalt thou bring forth thy stuff by day in their sight, as stuff for removing: and thou shalt go forth at even in their sight, as they that go forth into captivity. 5. Dig thou through the wall in their sight, and carry out thereby. 6. In their sight shalt thou bear it upon thy shoulders, and carry it forth in the twilight: thou shalt cover thy face, that thou see not the ground: for I have set thee for a sign unto the house of Israel. 7. And I did so as I was commanded: I brought forth my stuff by day, as stuff for captivity, and in the even I digged through the wall with my hand: I brought it forth in the twilight, and I bare it upon my shoulder in their sight. 8. And in the morning came the word of the Lord unto me, saying, 9. Son of man, hath not the house of Israel, the rebellious house, said unto thee, What dost thou?
13. Say thou unto them, Thus saith the Lord God, This burden concerneth the prince in Jerusalem, and all the house of Israel that are among them. 11. Say, I am your sign: like as I have done, so shall it be done unto them; they shall remove, and go into captivity. 12. And the prince that is among them shall bear upon his shoulder in the twilight, and shall go forth; they shall dig through the wall to carry out thereby; he shall cover his face, that he see not the ground with his eyes. 13. My net also will I spread upon him, and he shall be taken in mine snare: and I will bring him to Babylon, to the land of the Chaldeans; yet shall he not see it, though he shall die there. 14. And I will scatter toward every wind all that are about him to help him, and all his bands; and I will draw out the sword after them. 15. And they shall know that I am the Lord, when I shall scatter them among the nations, and disperse them in the countries. 16. But I will leave a few men of them from the sword, from the famine, and from the pestilence, that they may declare all their abominations among the heathen whither they come; and they shall know that I am the Lord.

Perhaps Ezekiel reflected with so much pleasure upon the vision he had had of the glory of God, that often, since it went up from him, he was wishing it might come down to him again, and, having seen it once and a second time, he was willing to hope he might be a third time so favoured; but we do not find that he ever saw it any more; and yet the word of the Lord comes to him; for God did in divers manners speak to the fathers, (Heb. i. 1.) and they often heard the words of God, when they did not see the visions of the Almighty. Faith comes by hearing that word of prophecy, which is more sure than vision. We may keep up our communion with God, though we do not see visions and ecstasies.

In these verses, the prophet is direct, and say:

I. By what signs and actions to express the approaching captivity of Zedekiah king of Judah; that was the thing to be foretold; and it is foretold to them that are already in captivity, because as long as Zedekiah was upon the throne, they flattered themselves with hopes that he would make his part good with the king of Babylon, whose yoke he was not yet strong under; from hence it is probable, these poor captives promised themselves great things, and, it may be, when he was forming that design, he privately sent encouragement to them to hope that he would rescue them shortly, or procure their liberty by exchange of prisoners; and while they were fed with these vain hopes, they could not set themselves out to submit to their affliction, or to labour under their captivity. It was therefore necessary, but very difficult, to convince them that Zedekiah, instead of being their deliverer, should very shortly be their fellow-sufferer.

Now, one would have thought, it might have been sufficient if the prophet had only told them this in God's name, as he does afterward; (v. 16.) but, to prepare them for the prophecy of it, he must first give them a sign of it; must speak it to their eyes first, and then to their ears; and here we have.

1. The reason why he must take this method; (v. 2.) it is because they are a stupid, dull, unthinking people, that will not hear, or will see is forgot, but least they should be affected at any time; they will only hear of it; it will make no impression at all upon them; That dwell in the midst of a rebellious house, whom it is next to impossible to work any good upon; they have eyes and ears, they have in intellectual powers and faculties, but they see not, they hear not; they were idolaters, whose character it was, that we should like the idols they war shipped, which have ears, and are dumb, and they hear not, Ps. cxv. 8. Note, These are to be reckoned rebellions, that shut their eyes against the divine light, and stop their ears to the divine law. The ignorance of them that are willfully ignorant, that have faculties and means, and will not use them, is so far from being their excuse, that it adds more guilt to them: as those that will not hear, so deaf, as those that will not hear, that will not see. They see not, they hear not; for they are a rebellious house. This is all from themselves; the darkness of the understanding is owing to the stubbornness of the will. Now this is the reason why he must speak to them by signs, as deaf people are taught, that they might be either instructed or ashamed.

Ezekiel may, by these events, accommodate himself not only to the weakness, but to the willfulness, of those they deal with, and deal with them accordingly: if they dwell among those that are rebellious, they must speak to them the more plainly and pressingly, and take that course that is most likely to work upon them, that they may be left inexcusable.

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

Thus Ezekiel must be himself a sign to them, and when perhaps he seemed somewhat backward to put himself to all this trouble, and to expose himself to be bantered and ridiculed for it, to reconcile him to it, God says, (v. 5.) "It may be they will consider, and will by it be taken from their confidence in their own strength, and be afraid of it, and go away at even in their sight, with fear and trembling, and may go as they that go forth into captivity, (v. 4.) that is, he must cover his face, (v. 6.) being ashamed to be seen, and afraid to be known, or in token of very great sorrow and concern; he must go away as a poor broken tradesman, who, when he is forced to shut up shop, hides his head, or runs his country."

Note, We must not despair, even of the worst, but that yet they may be brought to think themselves, and repent; and therefore we must continue the use of proper means for their conviction and conversion, because, while there is life, there is hope. And ministers must be willing to go through the most difficult and inconvenient offices, (for such was this Ezekiel's removing,) though there be but the "may be" of success. If but one soul should be awakened to consider, our care and pains will be well bestowed.
3. Ezekiel's ready and punctual obedience to the orders God gave him; (v. 7.) I did so as I was commanded. Hence he teaches us all, and ministers especially, (1.) To obey with cheerfulness every command of God, even when it may seem most difficult. Christ himself learned obedience, and so we must all. (2.) To do so we can for the good of the souls of others, to put ourselves to any trouble or pains for the conviction of those that are unconvinc'd. We do all things, that is, we are willing to do any thing, dearly beloved, for your edification. (3.) To be ourselves affected with those things where with we desire to affect others. When Ezekiel would give God a proper showing, he offers himself upon a melancholy occasion. (4.) To sit loose to this world, and prepare to leave it; to carry out our stuff for removing, because we have no longer continuance. Arise, depart, this is not your rest, for it is polluted. Thou dwellest in a rebellious house, therefore prepare for removing; for who would not be willing to leave such a house, such a wicked world as this? (v. 11.) He is directed by what words to explain those signs and actions, as Agabus, when he bound his own hands and feet, told, whose binding was thereby signified. But observe, it was not till morning that God gave him an exposition of the sign, till the next morning, to keep up in him a continual dependence upon God for instruction. As what God does, so what he directs us to do, perhaps we know not now, but shall know hereafter, as appears to the people, who would ask the meaning of this sign, or at least they should; (v. 9.) "Hath not the house of Israel said unto thee, What doest thou? Yes, I know they have. Though they are a rebellious house, yet they are inquisitive concerning the mind of God;" as these (Isa. lxv. 2.) who sought God daily. Therefore the prophet must do such a strange, uncanny thing, that they might inquire what it meant, and that it may be helpful, people will take notice of what is told them, and profit by it, when it comes to them in answer to their inquiries. But some understand it as an intimation, that they had not made any such inquiries; Hath not this rebellious house so much as asked thee, What doest thou? No, they take no notice of it; but tell them the meaning of it, though they do not ask. What 20 see, he observes what entertainment we give to the messages he sends us; he hearkens and hears what we say to them, and what inquiries we make upon them; and is much displeased if we pass them by without taking any notice of them. When we have heard the word, we should apply ourselves to our ministers for further instruction; and then we shall know, if we thus follow on to know. (v. 10.) The prophet is to tell them the meaning of it. In general, (v. 10.) This burden concerns the prince in Jerusalem; they knew who that was, and glori'd in it now that they were in captivity, that they had a prince of their own in Jerusalem, and that the house of Israel was yet entire there, and therefore doubted not but in time to do well enough. But tell them, says God, that in what thou hast done, they may read the doom of their friends at Jerusalem. But, I am done sign, v. 11. As the conversation of ministers should teach the people what they should do, so the providences of God concerning them are sometimes intended to tell them what they must expect. The unsettled state and removes of ministers give warning to people what they must expect in this world, no continuance, but constant changes. What times of trouble are going on? God tells his doings. They shall first lay their hands upon you, Luke xxi. 12. (1.) The people shall be led away into captivity; (v. 11.) As I have done, so will he be done unto them, they shall be forced away from their own houses, no more to return to them, neither shall their place know them any more. We cannot say concerning our dwelling-place, that it is our resting-place; for how far we may be tossed from it before we die, we cannot fix a price. (2.) The prince shall in vain attempt to make his escape, for he also shall go into captivity. Jeremiah had told Zedekiah the same to his face; (Jer. xxxiv. 3.) Thou shalt not escape, but shalt surely be taken. Ezekiel here foretells it to those who made him their confidence, and promised themselves relief from him. [1.] That he shall himself carry away his soveraign goods, and one upon his shoulder some of his most valuable effects. Note, The judgments of God can turn a prince into a porter. He that was to have the regalia carried before him, and to march through the city at noon-day, shall now himself carry his goods on his back, and steal away out of the city in the twilight. See what a change sin makes with men! All the avenues to the palace being carefully watched by the enemy, they shall dig through the wall, to carry out thereby. Men shall be their own house-breakers, and steal away their own goods; so it is when the sword of war has cancelled all right and property. [2.] That he shall attempt to escape in a disguise, with a mask or vizard on, which shall cover his face, so that he shall be able only to look before him, and shall not see the ground beneath his feet, or, as he tells him, he, in his flight, affected to be seen, now that he is in his flight, is afraid to be seen; let none therefore either be proud of being looked at, or overmuch pleased with looking about them, when they see a king with his face covered, that he cannot see the ground. [3.] That he shall be made a prisoner, and carried captive into Babylon; (v. 13.) My net will I spread upon him, and he shall be taken in mine net. He is to be taken by Chaldean's net, and their snare, but God owns it for his. Those that think to escape the sword of the Lord, will find themselves taken in his net. Jeremiah had said, that king Zedekiah should see the king of Babylon, and that he should go to Babylon; Ezekiel says, He shall be brought to Babylon, yet he shall not see it, though he shall die there. Those that were dispersed, he tells them, shall be gathered; these six prophets contradicted one another; for one said, He shall see the king of Babylon, the other said, He shall not see Babylon; and yet both proved true; he did see the king of Babylon at Riblah, where he passed sentence upon him for his rebellion, but there he had his eyes put out, so that he did not see Babylon when he was brought thither. These captives expected to see their prince come to Babylon as a conqueror, to bring them out of their trouble; but he shall come thither a prisoner, and his disgrace will be a great addition to their troubles. Little joy could they have in seeing him, when he could not see them. [4.] That all his goods should be dispersed, and utterly disabled to do any service; (v. 14.) I will scatter all that are about him to help him, so that he shall be left his own self; and his servants shall scatter, scattering his men, to dishonour them in the countries, (v. 15.) to be monuments of divine justice wherever they go. But are there not hopes that they may rally again? (He that flies one time, may fight another time;) No, I will draw out the sword after them, which shall cut them off wherever it finds them; for the sword that God draws out will be sure to do the execution designed yet of Zedekiah scattered with his eyes; (v. 16.) I will leave a few men of them; though they shall all be scattered, yet they shall not all be cut off, some shall have their lives given them for a prey; the end for which they are thus remarkably spared, is very observable, that they may declare all their abominations among the heathen
whither they come; the troubles they are brought into will bring them to themselves and to their right mind, and then they will acknowledge the justice of God in all that is brought upon them, and will make an ingenuous confession of their sins which provoked God thus to contend with them; and as by this it shall appear that they were spared in mercy, so hereby they will make a suitable, grateful, humble return to God for his kindness to them; and they shall declare that God had given them a taste of their own evil. Note, When God has remarkably delivered us from the depths wherewith we were surrounded, we must look upon it for that end, among others, we were spared, that we might glorify God, and edify others, by making a penitent acknowledgment of our sins. Those that by their afflictions are brought to this, are then made to know that God did it for his honour and for his name’s sake; and, moreover, for the knowledge of him. See how God brings good out of evil! The dispersion of sinners, who had done God much dishonour and disservice in their own country, proves the dispersion of penitents, who shall do him much honour and service in other countries. The Levites are by a curse divided in Jacob, and scattered in Israel, yet it is turned into a blessing, for thereby they have the fairest opportunity to teach Jacob God’s law.

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

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

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

2. He must tell them that the inhabitants of Jerusalem should in like manner eat and drink with care and fear, v. 19, 20. Both those that have their home in Jerusalem, and those of the land of Israel, that come to shelter themselves there, they shall eat their bread with carefulness, and drink their water with astonishment, either because they are afraid it will not hold out, but they shall want shortly, or because they are continually expecting the alarms of the enemy, their life hanging in doubt to be fore them, (Deut. xxxviii. 66.) so that what they have they shall have no enjoyment of, nor will it do them any good. Note, Care and fear, if they prevail, are enough to inhibit all our comforts, and are themselves very sore judgments. They shall be reduced to these straits, that thus by degrees, and by the hand of those that thus straiten them, both city and country may be laid in ruins; for it is no less than an utter destruction of both that is aimed at in these judgments; that her land may be desolate from all the fulness thereof, may be stripped of all its ornament, and robbed of all its fruits; and then of course the cities that are inhabited shall be laid waste, but they are served by the field. This universal lamenting then shall be spread abroad, and then no wonder that they expect to be surrounded with care and fear. Now we are here told, (1.) How bad the cause of this judgment was; it is because of the violence of all them that dwell therein; their injustice and oppression, and the mischief they did one another; for which God would reckon with them, as well as for the affronts put upon him in his worship. Note, The retribution of virtue in a nation brings on a decay of every thing else; and when neighbouring devour one another, it is just with God to bring enemies upon them to devour them all. (2.) How good the effect of this judgment should be; Ye shall know that I am the Lord, and if, by these judgments, they learn to know him aright, that will make up the loss of all they are deprived of by these devastations. These are happy afflictions, humble, ingenuous sorrows to flesh and blood, that help to introduce us into, and improve us in, an acquaintance with God.

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

Various methods have been used to awaken this secure and careless people to an expectation of the judgments coming, that they might be stirred up to repentance and reformation, to prevent them. The prophecies of their ruin were confirmed by visions,
and illustrated by signs, and all with such evidence and power, that one would think they must needs be wrought up; but here we are told how they evaded the conviction, and guarded against it, namely, by telling themselves, and one another, that though these judgments threatened should come at last, yet the prophet could not come of a long time.

This suggestion, with which they bolstered themselves up in their security, is here answered, and showed to be vain and groundless, in two messages which God sent to them by the prophet at different times, both to the same purport; such care, such pains, must the prophet take to undeceive them! v. 21, 26.

Observe, 1. How they flattered themselves with hopes that the judgments should be delayed. One saying they had, which was become proverbial in the land of Israel, v. 22. They said, "The days are prolonged, the judgments are not come when they were expected to come; but seem to be still put off die in them—from day to day, and therefore we may conclude that every vision fails, because it should seem that some do; that, because the destruction is not come yet, it will never come; we will never trust a prophet again, for we have been worse frightened than hurt." And another saying they had, which, if it would not conquer their convictions, yet should cool their affections, and abate their concern, and that was, "The vision is for a great while to come, it refers to events at a vast distance, and the prophet does not make us think that the trouble is quite yet to be a reality; so that we need not to trouble our heads about them, (v. 27.) we may die in honour and peace before these troubles come." And if indeed the troubles had been thus adjourned, they might have made themselves easy, as Hezekiah did, "Is it not well, if peace and truth shall be in my days? But it was a great mistake, and they did but deceive themselves into their own miseries; and therefore concluded the vision itself failed, because the days were prolonged. 2. It received comittance from the false prophets that were among them, as should seem from the notice God takes (v. 24.) of the vain visions, and flattering divinations, even within the house of Israel, to whom were committed the oracles of God. Nor marvel if they that deceived themselves by worshipping pretended deities, deceived themselves by crediting pretended prophecies; to which strong delusions God justly gave them up for their idolatries. 3. These sayings were become proverbial; they were industriously spread among the people, so that they were got into every one's mouth, and not only so, but were generally assented to, as proverbs are, not only the proverbs of the ancients, but many of those that never lived. Note, It is a token of universal degeneracy in a nation, when corrupt and wicked sayings are grown proverbial; and it is an artifice of Satan, by them to confirm men in their prejudices against the word and ways of God, and a great offence to the God of heaven. It will not serve for an excuse, in saying ill, to plead that it is a common saying.

But, 1. They will not and do not deceive themselves, for the judgments shall be hastened, these profligate sayings shall be confronted; Tell them therefore, The days are at hand; (v. 23.) and again, (v. 28.) There shall none of my words be prolonged any more. Their putting the evil day far from them does but provoke God to bring it the sooner upon them; and it will be so much the sorrier, so much the heavier, so much the more a surprise and terror to them, when it does come. He must tell them,

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

2. Their own oracles will be very shortly, accomplish every word that he has spoken. With what majesty does he say it, (v. 25.) I am the Lord! I am Jehovah! That glorious name of his speaks him a God giving being to his word by the performance of it, and therefore to the patriarchs, who lived by faith in a promise not yet performed, he was not known by his name Jehovah, Exod. v. 3. But this he will be to all the nations, and so he is in making good his threatenings. Let them know then that God, with whom they have to do, is the great Jehovah, and therefore, (1.) He will speak, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear; I am the Lord, I will speak. God will have his saying, whoever gainsays it. God's oracles are called lively words, for they still speak, when the pagan oracles are long ago struck dumb. There has been, and shall be, a succession of God's ministers to the end of the world, by whom he will speak; and though contempt may be put upon them, that shall not put a period to their ministration; In your days, O rebellious house, I will say the word. Even in the worst eyes of the church God left not his own without witness, but did raise up men that spake for him, that spake from him. I will say the word, the word that shall stand.

(2.) The word that he speaks shall come to pass, it shall infallibly be accomplished according to the true intent and meaning of it, and according to the full extent and compass of it: I will say the word, and will perform it; (v. 25.) for his mind is never changed nor his arm shortened, nor is infinite wisdom ever imposed upon men; and therefore God says, No, there shall be the effect of every vision, (v. 22.) it shall not return void, but every sign shall be answered by the thing signified. They that see the visions of the Almighty, do not see vain visions; God confirms the word of his servants by performing it.

(3.) It shall be accomplished very shortly; "The
days are at hand, when you shall see the effect of every vision, v. 23. It is said, it is sworn, that delay shall be no longer; (Rev. v. 6.) the year of God's patience is now just expired, and he will no longer defer the execution of the sentence. It shall be no more prolonged; (v. 25.) he has borne with you a great while, but he will not bear always. In your days, O rebellious house, shall the word that is said be performed, and you shall see the threatened judgments, and share in them. Behold, their prophecies are but the arrow from the bow. The arrows are taken away from the bow to come, but this rebellious house shall not be so quietly taken away; no, they shall live to be hurried away, to be chased out of the world. This is repeated again; (v. 26.) There shall none of my words be prolonged any more, but judgment shall now hasten on space; and the longer the bow has been in the drawing, the deeper shall the arrow pierce. When we tell sinners of death and judgment, heaven and hell, and think by them to persuade them to a holy life, though we do not find them downright infidels, (they will own that they do believe there is a state of rewards and punishments in the other world,) yet they put by the force of those great truths, and avoid the impressions of them, by looking upon the things of the other world as very remote, and a long time to come. There are many days to come, and you prophesy of the times that are very far off; it will be time enough to think of them when they come nearer; whereas really there is but a step between us and death, between us and an awful eternity; yet a little while, and the vision shall speak and not lie, and therefore it concerns us to redeem time, and get ready with all speed for a future state; for though it is future, it is very near; and while inimical sinners slumber, their damnation slumbers not.

CHAP. XIII.

Mention has been made, in the chapter before, of the vain visions and flattering divisions with which the people of Israel had suffered themselves to be imposed upon; (v. 21.) now this whole chapter is levelled against them. God's faithful prophets are no where so sharp upon any sort of sinners as upon the false prophets; not because they were the most sinful enemies to them, but because they put the highest affront upon God, and did the greatest mischief to his people. The prophet here shows the sin and punishment, 1. Of the false prophets, v. 1-19. O Israel, prophesy! (Isa. l. xii.) I agreed to soothe men up in their sins, and, under pretence of comforting God's people, to flatter them with hopes that they should yet have peace; but the prophets shall be proved liars, and the people shall be convicted of the expectation of the people illusions; for God will let them know, that the deceived and the deceiver are his, are both accountable to him, Job xii. 16.

1. And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel, that prophesy; and say thou unto them that prophesy out of their own hearts, Hear ye the word of the Lord: 3. Thus saith the Lord God, Wo unto the foolish prophets that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing! 4. O Israel, thy prophets are like the foxes in the deserts. 5. Ye have not gone up into the gaps, neither made up the hedge for the house of Israel, to stand in the battle in the day of the Lord. 6. They have seen vanity and lying divination, saying, The Lord saith; and the Lord hath not sent them; and they have made others to hope that they would confirm the word. 7. Have ye not seen a vain vision, and have ye not spoken a lying divination, whereas ye say, The Lord saith it; albeit I have not spoken? 8. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Because ye have spoken vanity, and seen lies, therefore, behold, I am against you, saith the Lord God. 9. And my hand shall be upon the prophets that see vanity, and that divine lies: they shall not be in the assembly of my people, neither shall they be written in the writing of the house of Israel, neither shall they enter into the land of Israel; and ye shall know that I am the Lord God.

The false prophets, who are here prophesied against, were some of them at Jerusalem; (Jer. xxiii. 14.) I have seen in the prophets at Jerusalem a horrible thing; some of them among the captives in Babylon, for to them Jeremiah writes, (Jer. xxix. 8.) Let not your diviners, that be in the midst of you, deceive you. And as God's prophets, though at a distance from each other in place or time, yet preached the same truths, which was an evidence against them that they were not inspired by one and the same good Spirit, so the false prophets prophesied the same lies, being actuated by one and the same spirit of error. There were little hopes of bringing them to repentance, they were so hardened in their sin; yet Ezekiel must prophesy against them, in hopes that the people might be cautioned not to hearken to them; and thus a testimony will be left upon record against them, and they thereby left inexcusable. Ezekiel had express orders to prophesy against the prophets of Israel; so they called themselves, as it none but they had been worthy of the name of Israel's prophets, who were indeed Israel's deceivers. But it is observable that Israel was never imposed upon by pretenders to prophecy till after they had rejected and abused the true prophets; as afterward, they were never deluded by counterfeit messiahs, till after they had refused the true Messiah, and rejected him. These false prophets must be required to hear the word of the Lord. They took upon them to speak what concerned others, as from God; let them now hear what concerned themselves, as from him.

And two things the prophet is directed to do; 1. To discover their sin to them, and to convince them of it if possible, or thereof make them to proceed any further, by making manifest their folly unto all men, 2 Tim. iii. 9. They are here called foolish prophets, (v. 3.) men that did not at all understand the business they pretended to: to make fools of the people, they made fools of themselves, and put the greatest cheat upon their own souls. Let us see what is here laid to their charge. 1. They have not sent them who is the Lord God of the holy prophets, which was a foolish thing; for how could they expect that God should own them in a work to which he never called them? They are prophets out of their own hearts; so the margin reads it; (v. 2.) prophets of the house of Israel; for the Spirit of the Lord never dictated to them, but they pretended to be his messengers, but the Lord hath not sent them, has not given them any orders; they counterfeit the broad seal of heaven, than which they cannot do a greater indignity to mankind, for hereby they put a reproach upon divine revelation, lessen its credit, and weaken its credibility; when these pretenders are found to be deceivers, atheists and infidels will hence infer, they are all so. The Lord has not sent them; for, though crafty enough,
in other things, like the foxes, and very wise for the world, yet they are foolish prophets, and have no
Source: An Examination of the Prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah... by William Green. 1724
Note: Foolish prophets are not of God's sending, for whom he sends he either finds fit, or makes fit.
Where he gives warrant, he gives wisdom.
2. They pretend to have instructions from God, whereas he never made himself and his mind known to
them; They followed their own spirit, (v. 3.) they deliver that as a message from God, which is the
purest, whereas they are the deaf and blind, that turn for themselves, or of their own cruized and
heated imagination, to give vent to a fancy; for they have seen nothing, they have not really had any
heavenly vision; they pretend that what they say, the Lord saith it, but God disowns it, I have not
spoken it, I never said it, never meant any such thing.
What they delivered was not what they had seen or heard, as that is which the mine was. Christ denied, or delivered, (1 John i. 1.) but either what they had dreamed, or what they thought would please those they coveted to make an interest in; this is called their seeing vanity and lying divination, (v. 6.) they pretend to have seen that which they did not see, and produced that as a divine truth, which they knew to be false. To the same purport, (v. 7.) Ye have seen a vain vision, and spoken a lying div
vision, which have divested the heavens of their glory, whereas really they had none, but either it was the
creature of their own fancy, (they thought they had a vision, as men in a delirium do, that was seeing vanity,) or it was a fiction of their own politics, and they knew they had none, and then they saw lies, and divined lies. See Jer. xxiii. 16, &c.
Note, Since the devil is universally known to be the father of lies, those put the highest skill imaginable upon God who had had, and then their untruths upon God. But they that had put God's character upon Satan, in worshipping devils, arrived at length at such a pitch of impurity as to put Satan's character upon God.
3. They took no care to prevent the judgments of God, that were breaking in upon the kingdom. They are like the foxes in the deserts, running to and fro, and seeming to be in a great hurry, but it was to get away, and shift for their own safety, not to do
any good; The hireling flees, and leaves the sheep. They are like foxes that are greedy of prey for themselves, crafty and cruel to feed themselves. But, (v. 5.) Ye have not gone up into the gaps, nor made up the hedge of the house of Israel. A breach is made in their fences, at which judgments are ready to pour in upon them, and then, if ever, is the time to do them service; They have not done what they should have done. They should have made intercession for them, to turn away the wrath of God; but they were not praying prophets, had no interest in heaven, nor intercourse with heaven, (as prophets used to have, Gen. xx. 7.) and so could do them no service at all. They should have made it their business by preaching and advice, to bring people to repentance and reformation, and to make the people.But this was none of their care, they contrived how to please people, not how to profit them. They saw a deluge of profaneness and impurity breaking in upon the land, waging war with virtue and holiness, and threatening to crush them and hear them down, and then they should have come in to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty, by witnessing against the wicked
ness of the time and place they lived in; but they thought it was no concern of theirs, to make a service as standing in a breach to make it good against the besiegers, and therefore they declined it, did nothing to stem the tide, stood not in the battle against vice and immorality, but basely deserted the cause of religion and reformation, in the day of the Lord, when it was proclaimed, Who is on the Lord's side? Who will rise up for me against the evil-do-
ners? Ps. 141. 1. But it was the name of prophets, that could think so favourably of sin, and had so little zeal for God and the public welfare.
4. They flattered people into a vain hope that the judgments God had threatened would never come, whereby they hardened these in sin whom they should have endeavoured to turn from sin; (v. 6.) They have made others to hope that all should be well, and they should have peace, though they went on still in their trespasses, and that the event would confirm the word. They were still ready to say, We will warrant you that these troubles will be at an end quickly, and we shall be in prosperity again; as if their warrants would confirm false prophecies, in defiance of God himself.
11. He is directed to denounce the judgments of God against them for these sins, from which their pretending to the character of prophets would not exempt them.
1. In general, here is a Wf against them, (v. 3.) and what that wo is, we are told; (v. 8.) Behold, I am against you, saith the Lord God. Note, Those are in a woful condition, that have God against them. Wo, and a thousand woes, to them that have made their own salvation a matter of woe.
2. In particular, they are sentenced to be excluded from all the privileges of the commonwealth of Israel, for they are adjudged to have forfeited them all; (v. 9.) God's hand shall be upon them, to seize them, and bring them to his bar, to shut them out from his presence, and they will find it a fearful thing to fall into his hands. They pretend to be prophets, particular favourites of Heaven, and authorized to preside in the congregation of his church on earth; but by pretending to the honours they were not entitled to they lost those that otherwise they might have enjoyed, Matth. v. 19. Their doom is, (1.) To be expelled out of the communion of saints, and not to be looked upon as belonging to it; They shall not be in the secret of my people; their folly shall be clearly manifested, that they shall never be consulted, nor their advice asked; they shall not be present at any debates about public affairs. Or, rather, they shall not be in the assembly of God's people for religious worship, for they shall be ashamed to show their heads there, when they are proved by the events to be false prophets, and, like Cain, shall go out from the presence of the Lord. The people that are deceived by them shall be distinguished by their marks; they shall have no dealing with them. They that usurped Moses's chair shall not be allowed so much as a door-keeper's place. In the great day they shall not stand in the congregation of the righteous, (Ps. i. 5.) when God gathers his saints together to him, (Ps. 1. 3, 16.) to be for ever with him. (2.) To be expelled out of the book of the living. They shall die in their captivity, and shall not inhabit the land of Israel, and so take their denomination from them, and so their names shall not be found among those who either themselves or their posterity returned out of Babylon, of whom a particular account was kept in a public register, which was called the writing of the house of Israel, such as we have, Ezra ii. They shall not be found among the living in Jerusalem, Is. iv. 3. Or, They shall not be found written
among those whom God has from eternity chosen to be vessels of his mercy to eternity. We read of them, 'They, standing in Christ's vineyard, and who will tell them that he never knew them, (Matt. vii. 23, 24,) because they were not among those that were given to him.' The Chaldee Paraphrase reads it, 'They shall not be written in the writing of eternal life, which is written for the righteous of the house of Israel. See Ps. xlii. 5. (5) To be forever excluded out of the land of Israel. God has sworn in his wrath concerning them, that they shall never enter with the returning captives into the land of Canaan, which a second time remains a rest for them. Note, Those who oppose the design of God's threatenings, and will not be awed and influenced by them, forfeit the benefit of his promises, and cannot expect to be comforted and encouraged by them. 10. Because, even because they have seduced my people, saying, Peace, and there was no peace; and one built up a wall, and, lo, others daubed it with untempered mortar. 11. Say unto them which daub it with untempered mortar, that shall it fall: there shall be an overflowing shower; and ye, O great hailstones, shall fall; and a stormy wind shall rend it. 12. Lo, when the wall is fallen, shall it not be said unto you, Where is the daubing wherewith ye have daubed it? 13. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, I will even rend it with a stormy wind in my fury; and there shall be an overflowing shower in mine anger, and great hailstones, in my fury, to consume it. 14. So will I break down the wall that ye have daubed with untempered mortar, and bring it down to the ground, so that the foundation thereof shall be discovered, and it shall fall, and ye shall be consumed in the midst thereof; and ye shall know that I am the Lord. 15. Thus will I accomplish my wrath upon the wall, and upon them that have daubed it with untempered mortar; and will say unto you, The wall is no more, neither they that daubed it; 16. To wit, the prophets of Israel, which prophesy concerning Jerusalem, and which see visions of peace for her, and there is no peace, saith the Lord God. We have here more plain dealing with the false prophets, and some further articles of their doom. We have seen the people made ashamed of the false prophets, (though sometimes they had been for a while believed in:) and now we shall do their false gods, with indignation; now here we find them as much ashamed of their false prophesies, which they had sometimes depended upon with much assurance. Observe, 1. How the people are deceived by the false prophets. Those flatterers seduce them, saying, Peace, and there was no peace, v. 16. They pretended to have seen visions of peace, v. 14. But that could not be, for there was no peace, saith the Lord God. There was no prosperity designed for them, and therefore there could be no ground for their security: yet they told them that God was at peace with them, and had mercy in reserve for them, and that the war they were engaged in with the Chaldeans, should soon end in an honourable peace, and their land should enjoy a happy repose and tranquility. They told the idolaters and other sinners, that there was neither harm nor danger in the way they were in. Thus they seduced God's people, they put a cheat upon them, led them into mistakes, and drew them aside out of that way of repentance and amendment which the other prophets were endeavouring to bring them into. Note, Those are the most seductive sinners, who suggest to sinners, that which tends to lessen their dread of sin and their fear of God. Now this is compared to the building of a slight, rotten wall, or, according to our Septuagint, a building which had the same purport with this, (Matt. vii. 26.) the building of a tower which seems to be a shelter and protection for awhile, but will fall when a storm comes. One false prophet built the wall, set up the notion that God was not at all displeased with Jerusalem, but that the city should be confirmed in its flourishing state, and be victorious over the powers that now threatened it. This notion was very pleasing, and he that started it made himself very acceptable by it, and was caressed by every body; which invited others to say the same. They made the matter look yet more plausible and promising; they daubed the wall, which the first had built, but it was with untempered mortar, sorry stuff, that will not bind nor hold the bricks together; they had given no other assurance that they said, nor had it any consistency with itself, but was like the rock of sand. They did not strengthen the wall, were in no case to make it firm, to see that they went upon sure grounds; they only daubed it to hide the cracks, and made it look well to the eye. And the wall thus built, when it comes to any stress, much more to any distress, will bulge and totter, and come down by degrees. Note, Doctrines that are groundless, though ever so grateful, that are built upon a scripture-foundation, or fastened with a scripture-cement, though ever so plausible, ever so pleasing, are not of any worth, nor will stand men in any stead. And those hopes of peace and happiness which are not warranted by the word of God, will but cheat men, like a wall that is well daubed indeed, but ill built. 11. How they will be soon undeceived by the judgment of God, which, we are sure, is according to truth. 1. God will in anger bring a terrible storm that shall beat fiercely and furiously upon the wall. The descent which the Chaldean army shall make upon Judah, and the siege which they shall lay to Jerusalem, will be as an overflowing shower, or inundation, (such as Solomon calls a sweeping rain that leaves no food, Prov. xxvi. 3.) will bear down all before it, as the deluge did in Noah's time. Ye, O great hailstones, shall fall, the artillery of heaven, every hailstone like a cannon-ball, battering this wall, and with these a stormy wind, which is sometimes so strong as to rend the rocks, (1 Kings xix. 11.) much more an ill-built wall, v. 1. But that which makes this rain, and hail, and wind most terrible, is, that it is from God, and are enforced by that; that is it that sends them; that is it that gives them the setting-on; (v. 13.) it is a stormy wind in my fury, and an overflowing shower in mine anger, and great hailstones in my fury. The fury of Nebuchadnezzar and his princes, who highly resented Zedekiah's treachery, made the invasion very formidable, but that was nothing in comparison of the fury and power of Judah, and the wrath which makes them frightful and formidable indeed; for who can stand before him when he is angry? 2. This storm shall overturn the wall; it shall fall, and the wind shall rend it, (v. 11.) the hailstones shall consume it; (v. 13.) I will break it down, (v.
And bring it to the ground, so that the foundation thereof shall be discovered, it will appear how false, how rotten it was, to the prophetic reproach of the builders; when the Chaldean army has made Judah and Jerusalem desolate, then this credit of the prophets, and the hopes of the people, will both sink together; the former will be found false in flattering the people, and the latter foolish in suffering themselves to be made the sport of the sarcasm of the wise men. Note, Whatever men think to shelter themselves against the judgments of God, while they continue unformed, will prove but a refuge of lies, and will not profit them in the day of wrath. See Isa. xxxviii. 17. Men's anger cannot shake that which God has built, (for the blast of the terrible ones is but as a storm against the wall, which makes a great noise, but never stirs the wall; see Isa. xxv. 4.) but God's anger will overthrow that which men have built in opposition to him. They and all their attempts, they and all the securities wherein they intrench themselves, shall be as a bowing wall, and as a tottering fence; (Ps. lxi. 5, 10.) and when their vain hopes are discovered, and their expected expectations disappointed, then it will be discovered that there was no ground for either; (Hab. iii. 13.) the day will declare what every man's work is, and the fire will try it, 1 Cor. iii. 13.

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

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

v. 16. Note, those that usurp the honours that do not belong to them, will shortly be filled with the shame that does. Likewise, thou son of man, set thy face against the daughters of thy people, which prophesy out of their own heart; and prophesy thou against them, 18. And say, Thus saith the Lord God, Wo to the women that sew pillows to all arm-holes, and make kerciefs upon the head of every stature, to hunt souls! Will ye hunt the souls of my people, and will ye save the souls alive that come unto you? 19. And will ye pollute me among my people for handfuls of barley, and for pieces of bread to slay the souls that should not die, and to save the souls alive that should not live, by your lying to my people that hear your lies? 20. Wherefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I am against your pillows, wherewith ye there hunt the souls to make them fly; and I will tear them from your arms, and will let the souls go, even the souls that ye hunt to make them fly. 21. Your kerciefs also will I tear, and deliver my people out of your hand, and they shall be no more in your hand to be hunted; and ye shall know that I am the Lord. 22. Because witlic lies ye have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; and strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life; 23. Therefore ye shall see no more vanity, nor divine divinations: for I will deliver my people out of your hand; and ye shall know that I am the Lord.

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

1. How the sin of these false prophetesses is described, and what are the particulars of it. They told deliberate lies to those who consulted them, and came to them to be advised, and they were told to God, and punished; they lied by you lying to my people that hear your lies; (v. 19.) they come to be told the truth, but you tell them lies; and because you humour them in their sins, they are willing to hear you." Note, It is ill with those people who can better bear hearing lies than unpleasing truths; and it is a temptation to them who lie in wait to deceive to tell lies, when they find people willing to hear them, and to excuse themselves with this, Si populus vult decipi, decipiat—If the people will be deceived, let them. 2. They profaned the name of God by pretending
to have received those lies from him; (v. 19.) "Ye pollute my name among my people, and make use of that for the patronising of your lies, and the gaining of credit to them." Note, Those greatly pollute God's holy name, that make use of it to give countenance to falsehood and wickedness. Yet this they did for handfuls of barley and pieces of bread; for they did it for gain; they cared not what dishonour they did to God's name by their lying, so they could but make a hand of it for themselves. There is nothing so sacred which men of mercenary spirits, in whom the love of this world reigns, will not prostitute and prostitute, if they can but get money by the bargain. But they are worse deformed, rather than break, than break a promise; for if they would sell you a false prophecy that should please you to a nicety, for the beggar's dole, a piece of bread, or a handful of barley; and yet that was more than it was worth. Had they asked it as an alms, for God's sake, surely they might have had it, and God would have been honoured; but, taking it as a fee for a false prophecy, God's name is polluted, and the smallness of the reward greaterens the offence; for a piece of bread that man will transgress, Prov. xxviii. 21. Had their poverty been their temptation to steal, and so to take the name of the Lord in vain, it had not been so bad as when it tempted them to prophecy lies in his name, and so to profane his name.

3. They kept people in awe, and terrified them with their pretensions; "You hunt the souls of my people, (v. 18.) hunt them to make them flee, (v. 20.) hunt them into gardens; (so the margin reads it;) you use all the arts you have to court or compel them into those places where you deliver your pretended predictions; or, you have got such an influence, that you make them believe you would have them do, and tyrannize over them."

It was indeed the people's fault, that they did regard them, but it was their fault by lies and falsehoods to command that regard; they pretended to save the souls alive that came to them, v. 18. If they would but be hearers of them, and contributors to them, they might be sure of salvation; thus they believed them not, that they might prove the salvation as their end, but did not rightly understand the way, and therefore hearkened to those who were most confident in promising it. But will you pretend to save souls, or secure salvation to your party? Those are justly suspected, which make such pretensions.

4. They discouraged those that were honest and good, and encouraged those that were wicked and profane; You slay the souls that should not die, and save those alive that should not live, v. 19. This is explained, v. 22. "You have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; because they would not, they durst not, countenance your pretensions, you thundered out the judgments of God against them, thus you cut their joy, but it was the assurance of their salvation as their end, but did not rightly understand the way, and therefore hearkened to those who were most confident in promising it. But will you pretend to save souls, or secure salvation to your party? Those are justly suspected, which make such pretensions.

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5. They mimicked the true prophets, by giving signs for the illustrating of their false predictions, as Hananiah did; (Jer. xxviii. 10.) and they were signs agreeable to their sex; they saved little hollows to the people's arm-holes, to signify that they might be easy, and repose themselves, and needed not be disquieted with the apprehensions of trouble approaching. And they made kerchiefs upon the head of every stature, of persons of every age, young and old, distinguishable by their stature, v. 25.

They invented badges of liberty, or triumph; intimating that they should not be conquered and delivered from the Chaldeans, but be victorious over them. Some think these were some superstitious rites which they used with those to whom they delivered their divinations, preparing them for the reception of them, by putting enchanted pillows under their arms, and kerchiefs on their heads, to shield their persons, and the persons to whom the thing was told, if it be anything great. Or, perhaps, the expressions are figurative; they did all they could to make people secure, which is signified by laying them easy, and to make people proud, which is signified by dressing them fine with handkerchiefs, perhaps laid or embroidered on their heads.

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

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

2. God's people shall be delivered out of their hands; when they see themselves deluded by them into a false peace and a fool's paradise, and that though they would not leave their sin, their sin has left them, and they see no more vanity, nor divine divinations, they shall turn their back upon them, shall sligt their predictions, the righteous shall be no more saddened by them, no, nor the wicked shall be strengthened by them. Their arms, and the kerchiefs from their heads, the falsities shall be discovered, their frauds detected, and the people of God shall no more be in their hand, to be hunted as they had been. Note, It is a great mercy to be delivered from a servile regard to, and fear of, those who, under colour of a divine authority, impose upon and tyrannize over the consciences of men, and say to their souls, bow down, that we may go over. But it is a sore grief to those already gone into captivity, who were humbled under their affliction, by which their hearts were made sad; and the commendations they gave to those who rebelled against the king of Babylon, who were hardened in their iniquities, by which their hands were strengthened; or, by their polluting of the name of God they saddened the hearts of good people who have a heart and generation for the fear of God, and confirmed atheists and infidels in their contempt of divine revelation, and furnished them with arguments against it. Note, Those have a great deal to answer for, who grieve the spirits, and weaken the hands, of good people, and who gratify the lusts of sinners, and animate them in their opposition to God, and work the destruction of souls; and many things strengthen the hands of sinners more than they tell them that they may be saved in their sins without repentance; or that there may be repentance, though they do not return from their wicked ways.

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

CHAP. XIV.

Hearing the word, and prayer, are two great ordinances of God, in which we are to give honour to him, and hope to find favour and acceptance with him; and yet, in this chapter, to our great surprise, we find some waiting upon God in the one, and some in the other, and yet not meeting with success, as they expected. 1. The elders of Israel come to hear the word, and inquire of the prophet, but, because they are not duly qualified, they meet with a rebuke instead of acceptance, (v. 1-5.) and are called upon to repent of their sins, and reform their lives; else it is at their peril to inquire of God, v. 6-11. 2. Noah, Daniel, and Job, are supposed to pray for this people, and yet, because the decree is gone forth, and the destruction of them is determined by a variety of judgments, their prayers shall not be answered, v. 12-21. And yet it is promised, in the close, that a remnant shall escape, v. 22, 23.

1. THEN came certain of the elders of Israel unto me, and sat before me, saying, 3. Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their heart, and put the stumbling-block of their iniquity before their face: should I be inquired of at all by them? 4. Therefore speak unto them, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God, Every man of the house of Israel that setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumbling-block of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to the prophet, I the Lord will answer him that cometh according to the multitude of his idols; 5. That I may take the house of Israel in their own heart, because they are all estranged from me through their idols. 6. Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God, Repent, and turn yourselves from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your abominations. 7. For every one of the house of Israel, or of the stranger that sojourneth in Israel, which separateth himself from me, and setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumbling-block of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to the prophet, I the Lord will answer him by myself: 8. And I will set my face against that man, and will make him a sign and a proverb, and I will cut him off from the midst of my people; and ye shall know that I am the Lord. 9. And if the prophet be deceived when he hath spoken a thing, I the Lord have deceived that prophet; and I will stretch out my hand upon him, and will destroy him from the midst of my people Israel. 10. And they shall bear the punishment of their iniquity: the punishment of the prophet shall be even as the punishment of him that seeketh unto him; 11. That the house of Israel may go no more astray from me, neither be polluted any more with all their transgressions; but that they may be my people, and I may be their God, saith the Lord God.

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

The account which God gave the prophet privately concerning them. They were strangers to him, he only knew that they were elders of Israel, that was the character they were, and as such he received them with respect, and, it is likely, was glad to see them so well disposed; but God gives them their real character, (v. 3.) they were idolaters, and did only consult Ezekiel, as they would any oracle of a pretended deity, to gratify their curiosity; and therefore he appeals to the prophet himself, whether they deserved to have any countenance or encouragement given them: Should I be inquired of at all by them? Should I accept their inquiries as an honour to myself, or answer them for satisfaction to them? No; they have no reason to expect it; for, (1.) They have set up their idols in their heart; they not only have idols, but they are in very close union with them, and have made the beds of their idols, and have laid them so near their hearts, and have given them so great a room in their affections, that there is no parting of them. The idols they have set up in their houses, though they are now at a distance from the chambers of their imagery, yet they have them in their hearts, and they are ever and anon worshippers them in their fancies and imaginations: They have made their idols ascend upon their hearts; (so the word is;) they have subjected their hearts to their idols, they are upon the throne there; or, when they come to inquire of the prophet, they pretended to put away their idols, but it was in pretence only, they still had a secret reserve for them, they kept them up in their hearts; and if they left them for awhile, it was even animadversion—without intention to return to them, not a final farewell. Or, it may be understood of spiritual idolatry; those whose affections are placed upon the wealth of the world and the pleasures of sense, whose god is their money, whose god is their belly, they set up their idols in their heart. Many who have no idols in their sanctuary, have idols in their hearts; which is no less an usurpation of God's throne, and a profanation of his name, than the image and representations from those idols. (2.) They put the stumbling-block of their iniquity before their face. Their silver and gold were called the stumbling-block of their iniquity, (ch. vii. 19.) their idols of silver and gold, by the beauty of which they were
allured to idolatry, and so it was the block at which they stumbled, and fell into that sin; or, their iniquity is their stumbling-block, which throws them down, so that they fall into ruin. Note, Sinners are their own tempters; every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and so they were their own destroyers; if thou scornest, then shalt alone bear it; and thus they put the stumbling-block of their iniquity before their own faces, and stumble upon it, though they see it before their eyes. It intimates that they are resolved to go on in sin, whatever comes of it; {I have loved strangers, and after them I will go; that is the language of their hearts. And should God be imposed upon by them wretches? Do they not hereby rather put an affront upon him than do him any honour, as those did, who bowed the knee to Christ, in mockery? Can they expect an answer of peace from God, who thus continue their acts of hostility against him?"—Ezekiel, what thinkest thou of it?"

3. The answer which God, in just displeasure, orders Ezekiel to give them, v. 4. Let them know that it is not out of any disrespect to their persons, that God refuses to give them an answer, but it is laid down as a rule for every man of the house of Israel, whoever he be, that if he continue in love and league with his idols, and come to inquire of God, God will regard it as an indignity done to him, and will answer him according to his real iniquity, not according to the calamity which is consequent to the prophet, who, he expects, will be civil to him, but God will give him his answer, by punishing him for his impudence; {I the Lord, who speak, and it is done; I will answer him that cometh, according to the multitude of his idols.} Observe, Those who set up idols in their hearts, and set their hearts upon their idols, commonly have a multitude of them. Humble worshippers of God and his Church are answerable to the multitude of his mercies, but bold intruders are answerable to the multitude of their idols, that is, (1.) According to the desire of their idols; he will give them up to their own hearts' lust, and leave them to themselves to be as bad as they have a mind to be, till they have filled up the measure of their iniquity. Men's corruptions are idols in their hearts, and the more they affect the more of their temptations are the stumbling-block of their iniquity, and they are of their own putting, and God will answer them accordingly; let them take their courses. (2.) According to the desert of their idols; they shall have such an answer as it is just that such idolaters should have. God will punish them as he punishes idolaters, that is, when they stand in need of his help, he will send them to the gods whom they have chosen, Judg. x. 13, 14. Note, The judgment of God will dwell with men according to what they are really, that is, according to what their hearts are, not according to what they are in show and profession. And what will be the end of this? What will this threatened answer amount to? He tells them, v. 5, 6. The heart of man is full of iniquity, men lay them open to the world, that they may be ashamed; may, lay them open to the curse, that they may be ruined. Note, The sin and shame, and pain and ruin of sinners, are all from themselves, and their own hearts are the snares in which they are taken; they seduce them, they betray them, their own consciences witness against them, convict them, and are avengers of God against them, if they discover them, if he convict them, if he bind them over to his judgment, it is all by their own hearts. O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself. The house of Israel is ruined by its own hands; Because they are all estranged from me through their idols. Note, [1.] The ruin of sinners is owing to their estrangement from God. [2.] It is through some idol or other, that the hearts of men are estranged from God; some creature has gained that place and dominion in the heart, that God should have.

4. The extent of this answer which God had given them, to all the house of Israel, v. 7, 8. The same thing is repeated, which intimates God's just displeasure against hypocrites, who mock him with the shows and forms of devotion, while their hearts are estranged from him, and at war with him. Observe, (1.) To whom this declaration belongs; it concerns not only every one of the house of Israel, (as before, v. 4.) but the stranger that sojourns in Israel, (as Ezek. vii. 21.) let him not think it will be an excuse of his ruin, because he is in his idolatries, that he is but a stranger and a sojourner in Israel, and does but worship the gods that his father served, and that he himself was bred up in the service of; no, let him not expect any benefit from Israel's oracles or precepts, unless he thoroughly renounce his idolatry. Note, Even presbyters shall not be countenanced, if they be not sincere; a dissembl'd conversion is no conversion. (2.) The description here given of hypocrites: They separate themselves from God by their fellowship with idols; they cut themselves off from their relation to God, and their interest in him; they break off their acquaintance and intercourse with him, and set themselves at a distance from him. Note, Those that join themselves to idols, separate themselves from God, and are cut off from the vision and fruition of God, but such as now separate themselves from his service, and willingly withdraw their allegiance from him. But there are those who thus separate themselves from God, and yet come to the prophets, with a seeming respect and deference to their office, to inquire of them concerning God; either to satisfy a vain curiosity, to want the mouth of a clearer conscience, or to get or save a reputation among men; but without any desire to be acquainted with God, or any design to be ruled by him. (3.) The doom of these who thus trifle with God, and think to impose upon him: {I the Lord will answer him by myself; let me alone to deal with him; I will give him an answer that shall fill him with confusion, that shall make him repent of his daring impudence. He shall have his answer, not by the mouths of a clear conscience, but by the judgments of God. And I will set my face against that man, which denotes great displeasure against him, and a fixed resolution to ruin him. God can outface the most impetuous sinner. The hypocrite thought to save his credit, nay, and to gain applause, but, on the contrary, God will make him a sign and aWonder; will inflict such judgments upon him, as shall make him remarkable and contemptible in the eyes of all about him; his misery shall be made use of to express the greatest misery: as when the worst of sinners are said to have their portion appointed them with hypocrites, Matt. xxiv. 51. God will make him an example; his judgments upon him shall be for the comfort and encouragement of God's people.} For thus shall it be done to the hypocrites. Note, The discovery of hypocrites, it appears, that God is conscious: ministers know not how people stand affected when they come to hear the word, but God does; and by the punishment of hypocrites, it appears that he is a jealous God, and one that cannot, and will not, be imposed upon.

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

6. The good counsel that is given them for the preventing of this fearful doom; (v. 6.) "Therefore repent, and turn yourselves from your idols; let this separate between you and them, that they separate not between you and God; because they set God's face against you, do you turn away your faces from them, which doest not, not only forsaking them, but forsaking them with leathering and detestation; "Turn from them as from abominations that you are sick of; and then you will be welcome to inquire of the Lord. Come now, and let us reason together," v. 7. The good issue of all this, as to the house of Israel; therefore the pretending prophets, and the pretending saints, shall perish together by the judgment of God; in short, that, some being made examples, the body of the people may be reformed; that the house of Israel may go no more astray from me, v. 11. Note, The punishments of some are designed for the prevention of sin, that others may hear, and fear, and take warning. When we see what comes of those that go astray from God, we may be taught to keep close to him. And if the house of Israel are not astir, they will not be polluted any more. Note, Sin is a polluting thing; it renders the sinner odious in the eyes of the pure and holy God, and in his own eyes too, whenever conscience is awakened; and therefore they shall no more be polluted, that they may be my people, and I may be their God. Note, Those whom God takes into covenant with himself, must first be cleansed from the pollutions of sin, and those who are so cleansed shall not only be saved from ruin, but be entitled to all the privileges of God's people.

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

The scope of these verses is to show, 1. That national sins bring national judgments; when virtue is ruined and laid waste, every thing else will soon be ruined and laid waste too; (v. 13.) When the land sins against me, when vice and wickedness become epidemical, when the land sins
by trespassing grievously, when the sinners are become very numerous, and their sins very heinous, when gross impieties and immoralities universally prevail, then will I stretch forth mine hand upon it, for the punishment of it; the divine power shall be vigorously and openly exerted, the judgments shall be extended and stretched forth to all the corners of the land, to call the concerns and interests of the nation. Grievous sins bring grievous plagues.

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

Four sore judgments are here specified: (1.) Famine. The doing and withholding of common mercies is itself judgment enough, there needs no more to make a people miscible. God needs not bring the staff of oppression, it is but breaking the staff of bread, and the work is soon done; he cuts off man and beast, by cutting off the provisions upon which they are supported, and thus left without the means of life. God breaks the staff of bread, when, though we have bread, yet we are not nourished and strengthened by it; (Hag. i. 6) Ye eat, but ye have not enough. (2.) Hurttful beasts, noisome and noxious, either as poisons, or as ravensous; God can make these to pass through the land, to increase in all parts of it, and to bereave it, not only of the tame cattle, praying upon their backs and heads, but of their people, devouring men, women, and children, so that no man may pass through because of the beasts; none dare travel even in the high roads, for fear of being pulled in pieces by lions, or other beasts of prey, as the children of Beth-el by two bears. Note, When men revolt from their allegiance to God, and rebel against him, it is just with God to make these beast to be his instruments of retribution against man. Lev. xxvi. 22. (3.) War; God often chastises sinful nations by bringing a sword upon them, the sword of a foreign enemy, and he gives it his commission, and orders what execution it shall do; (v. 17.) he says, Sword, go through the land. It is bad enough if the sword do but enter into the borders of a land, but much worse when it goes through the bowels of a land. By it God cuts off man and beast, horse and foot; what execution the sword does, God does by it; for it is his sword, and it acts as he directs. (4.) Pestilence; a dreadful disease, which has sometimes devastated cities; by it God pours out his fury in blood; that is, in death; the pestilence kills as effectually as if the blood were shed by the sword; for it is poisoned by the blood of all the creatures. It is not possible the case of mankind is, that lies thus exposed to deaths in various shapes! See how dangerous the case of sinners is, against whom God has so many ways of fighting; so that though they escape one judgment, God has another waiting for them for.

3. That, when God’s professing people revolt from him, and rebel against him, they must, by experience, see what judgments of God would fall upon them. God has various ways of contending with a sinful nation: but if Jerusalem, the holy city, become a harlot, God will send upon her all his four sore judgments; (v. 21.) for the nearer any are to God in name and profession, the more severely will he reckon with them, if they reprouce that worthy name by which they are called, and give the lie to that profession. They shall be punished seven times more.

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

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

6. That such men as Noah, Daniel, and Job will prevail, if any can, to turn away the wrath of God from a sinful people. Noah was a perfect man, and kept his integrity, when all flesh had corrupted their ways; and for his sake, his family, though one of them was wicked, (Ham,) was saved in the ark. Daniel was a great example of piety, and patience in prayer for his children, for his friends, and God turned his captivity when he prayed. These were very ancient examples, before Moses that great intercessor; and therefore God mentions them, to intitle that he had some very peculiar favourites long before the Jewish nation was formed or founded, and would have such when it was ruined; for which reason, it should seem, these names were mentioned of, rather than Moses, Aaron, or Samuel; and yet, lest any should think that God was partial in his respects to the ancient days, here is a modern instance, a living one, placed between those two that were the glories of antiquity, and he now a captive, and that is Daniel, to teach us not to lessen the useful, good men of our own day, by ever-magnifying the ancients. Let the children of the captivity know that Daniel, their neighbour, and companion in tribulation, being a man of great humility, piety, and zeal for God, and instant and constant in prayer, had as good an interest in heaven as Noah or Job had. Why may not God raise up as great and good men now as he did formerly, and do as much for them? The spirit of the Lord God was upon the man of the waste place where he had dwelt, to make him a prophet unto the children of Israel. Ezekiel, XIV. 4.
little ones should be spared for their sakes, as the
smaller ones of Israel were upon the prayer of Moses,
Numb. xiv. 31. No, the land shall be desolate, and
God will not hear their prayers for it, though Moses
and Samuel stood before him, and interceded. Aote,
Alas! the nation will turn at last into inexcusable
wrath; and it shall seem as if God would be more
inexcusable in Jerusalem's case than in another, (v. 6.)
because, beside the divine patience, they had enjoyed
greater privileges than any people besides, which
were the aggravations of their sin.
8. That through prayers, praying men may not prevail
to deliver others, or to save themselves, they shall deliver
their own souls, by their righteousness; so that though
they may suffer in the common calamity, yet to them the
property of it is altered, it is not to them what it is
to the wicked; it is unstained, and does them no hurt;
it is sanctified, and does them good; sometimes
their souls, their lives, are remarkably delivered,
and given them for a prey; their souls, at least,
their spiritual interests, are secured; if their bodies
be not delivered, yet their souls are. Riches indeed
profit not in the day of wrath, but righteousness
delivers from death, from so great a death, so many
deaths as are here threatened. This should encour-
age us to keep our integrity in times of common
apostacy, that, if we do so, we shall be hid in the
day of the Lord's anger.
9. That, even then when God makes the greatest
delusions by his dispensations, he reserves some to
the monuments of his mercy, v. 22, 23. In Jer-
usalem itself, though marked for utter ruin, yet
there shall be left a remnant, who shall not be cut
off by any of those sore judgments before mentioned,
but shall be carried into captivity, both sons and
daughters, who shall be the seed of a new genera-
tion. The young ones, who were not grown up to
such an obstinacy in sin as their fathers were, who
were therefore cut off as inconsiderable, these shall
be brought forth out of the ruins of Jerusalem by the
victorious enemy, and behold, they shall come forth
to you that are in captivity, they shall make a virtue
of a necessity, and shall come the more willingly to
Babylon, because so many of their friends are gone
thither before them, and are there ready to receive
them. And when they come, you shall see their ways
and their doings; you shall hear them make a tree
and ingenious confession of the sins they had formerly
been guilty of, and a humble profession of repent-
ance for them, with promises of reformation; and
you shall see instances of their reformation, shall
see what good their affliction has done them, and
how prudently and patiently they conduct them-
selves under it. Their narrow escape shall have a
good effect upon them; it shall change their temper
and conversation, and make them new men. And
this will rebound, (1.) To the satisfaction of their
brethren; They shall comfort you, when ye see
their ways. Note, It is a very comfortable sight to
see people, when they are under the rod, repenting,
and humbling themselves, justifying God, and ac-
cepting the punishment of their iniquity. When we
surmise, as the people of Jerusalem, to the justice of God
in punishing his own people, or for the good of
others, it is a great comfort to us in our sorrow to
see them improving their afflictions, and making a
good use of them. When those captives told their
friends how bad they had been, and how righteous
God was in bringing these judgments upon them, it
made them very easy, and helped to reconcile them
to the judgments of God; to the justice of God
in punishing his own people, or for the good of
God, which now appeared to have had kind in-
tentions in all; and thus "You shall be comforted
concerning all the evil that I have brought upon
Jerusalem, and, when you better understand the
thing, shall not have such direful apprehensions
concerning it as you have had."
Note, It is a debt
we owe to our brethren, if we have got good by our
afflictions, to comfort them, by letting them know it.
(2.) It will redound to the honour of God; "Ye
shall know that I have not done without cause, not
without a just provocation, and yet not without a
generous design, all that I have done in it."
Note,
When afflictions have done their work, and have
accomplished that for which they were sent, then
will appear the wisdom and goodness of God in
sending them, and God will be not only justified, but
glorified, in them.

CHAP. XV.

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

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

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

1. It is true, if a vine be fruitful, it is a most
valuable tree, none more so; it was one of those
that were counted to have dominion over the trees, and
the fruit of it is such as cheers God and many; (Judg.
x. 12, 13.) it makes glad the heart, Ps. civ. 15. So
Jerusalem was planted a choice and noble vine,
wholly a right seed; (Jer. ii. 21.) and if it had
brought forth fruit suitable to its character, as a holy
city, it would have been the glory both of God and
Israel; it was a vine which God's right hand had
planted, a branch out of a dry ground, which, though its original was mean and despicable, God had made strong for himself; (Ps. lxxx. 15.) to be him for a name and for a praise.

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

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

II. How this similitude is applied to Jerusalem:

1. That holy city was become unprofitable, and good for nothing; it had been as the vine-tree among the trees of the vineyard, abounding in the fruits of righteousness to the glory of God; when religion flourished there, and the pure worship of God was known and enjoyed; but now it is gathered from in it; and while it continued so, God made a hedge about it; it was his pleasant plant, (Isa. v. 7.) he watered it every moment, and kept it night and day; (Isa. xxv. 7.) but it was now become the degenerate plant of a strange vine, of a wild vine, (such as we read of, 2 Kings iv. 38.) a vine-tree among the trees of the forest, which, being wild, brings forth wild grapes, (Isa. v. 4.) which are not only of no use, but are nauseous and noxious; (Deut. xxxiii. 32.) their grapes are grapes of gall, and their clusters are bitter. It is explained, v. 8. "They have treasured a treasun; they have treacherously persecuted with God, and perniciously apostatized from him;" for, which thing signifies. Note, Professors of religion, if they do not live up to their profession, but contradict it, if they degenerate and depart from it, are the most unprofitable creatures in the world, like the salt that has lost its savour, and is therefore good for nothing, Mark ix. 60. Other nations were famed for valour or politics, some for war, others for trade, and retained their credit; but the Jewish nation, being famous for a little, and a long time, when they lost their holiness, and became wicked, were thenceforth good for nothing; with that they lost all their credit and usefulness, and became the most base and despisable people under the sun, trodden under foot of the Gentiles. Daniel, and other pious Jews, were of great use in their generation, but the idolatrous Jews then, and the unbelieving Jews now, since the preaching of the gospel, have been, and are, of no common service, not fit for any work.

2. Being so, it is given to the fire for fuel. Note, Those who are not fruitful to the glory of God's grace, shall be fuel to the fire of his wrath; and thus, if they give not honour to him, he will get him honour upon them, honour that will shine bright in his fire, and be a flaming incense, (Isa. xliii. 3.) to be for ever consumed. He will not be a loser at last by any of his creatures. The Lord has made all things for himself, yea, even the wicked, that would not otherwise be for him, for the day of evil; (Prov. xiv. 4.) and in those who would not glorify him as the God to whom duty belongs, he will be glorified, and his grace and goodness be ascribed to him, and all praise be to his name. The fire of God's wrath had before devoured both the ends of the Jewish nation, (v. 4.) Samaria and the cities of Judah; and now Jerusalem, that was the midst of it, was thrown into the fire, to be burnt too, for it is meet for no work, it will not be wrought upon by any of the methods God has taken to destroy them, to halt them, to thwart all their counsels, as they set their faces against God, to contradict his word and defeat all his designs. It is decreed, the consumption is determined; I will make the land quite desolate, and therefore, when they go out from one fire, another fire shall devour them, (v. 7.) the end of one judgment shall be the beginning of another, and their escape from one only a reprieve till another comes; they shall go from misery in their own country to misery in Babylon. They who kept out of the way of the sword, perished by famine or pestilence: when one descent of the Chaldean forces upon them was over, and they thought, Surely the bitterness of death is past, yet soon after they returned, another, and another, till the land was made a full end. Thus they shall know that I am the LORD, a God of almighty power, when I set my face against them. Note, God shows himself to be the LORD, by perfecting the destruction of his implacable enemies as well as the deliverances of his obedient people. Those against whom God sets his face, though they may come out of one troubled place, another into another, though they may come out of the pit, will be taken in the snare, (Isa. xxv. 18.) though they escape the sword of Hazael, will fall by that of Jehu; (1 Kings xix. 17.) for evil pursues sinners: nay, though they go out from the fire of temporal judgments, and seem to die in peace, yet there is an everlasting fire that will devour them; for when God judges, first or last he will overcome; and he will be known by the judg-
A. AGAIN the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations.

3. And say, Thus saith the Lord God unto Jerusalem, Thy birth and thy nativity is of the land of Canaan; thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother a Hittite.

4. And as for thy nativity, in the day thou wast born, thy navel was not cut, neither wast thou washed in water to supple thee: thou wast not salted at all, nor swaddled at all.

5. None eyed thee, to do any of these unto thee, to have compassion upon thee; but thou wast cast out in the open field, to the loathing of thy person, in the day that thou wast born.

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

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

1. The extraction of the Jewish nation was mean; "Thy birth is of the land of Canaan;" (v. 3.) thou hast from the very first the spirit and disposition of a Canaanite. The patriarchs dwelt in Canaan, and they were there but strangers and sojourners, and had not possession of any power over the field of their own, but a burying-place. Abraham and Sarah were indeed their father and mother; but they were only inmates with the Amorites and Hittites, who, having the dominion, seemed to be as parents to the seed of Abraham, witness the event.

Abraham made to the children of Heth, (Gen. xiii. 4, 8.) and the dependence they had upon their labours, and the possession which they held of the field of the Canaanites, was in some respect much as they had of them, Gen. xxxii. 7-xxxv. 30. If the patriarchs, at their first coming to Canaan, had conquered it, and made themselves masters of it, it had put an honour upon their family, and had locked great in history; but, instead of that, they went from one nation to another, (Ps. xv.) as tenants from one farm to another, almost as beggars from one door to another, when they were but few in number, yea, very few. And yet this was not the worst; their fathers had served other gods in Ur of the Chaldees; (Josh. xxiv. 2.) even in Jacob's family there were strange gods, Gen. xxxv. 2. Thus early had they a genius leading them to idolatry; and upon this account their ancestors were Amorites and Hittites.

2. When they first began to multiply, their condition was really very deplorable, like that of a new-born child, which must of necessity die from the womb if the knees prevent it not, Jer. iii. 11, 12. The children of Israel, when they began to increase into a people and became considerable, were thrown out from the country that was intended for them, a famine drove them thence. Egypt was the open field into which they were cast; there they had no protection or countenance from the government they were under; but, on the contrary, were ruled with rigour, and their lives embittered; they had no encouragement given them to build up their families; no help to build up their estates, no friends or allies to strengthen their interests. Joseph, who had been the shepherd and stone of Israel, was dead; the king of Egypt, who should have been kind to them for Joseph's sake, set himself to destroy this man-child as soon as it was born, (Rev. xii. 4.) ordered all the males to be slain, which, it is likely, occasioned the exposing of many as well as Moses, to which perhaps the similitude here has reference. The founders of nations and cities had occasion for all the arts and arms they were masters of, to set their heads on work, by building and strong-holding, to preserve and nurse up their infant-states. "Toute molis est Romanum condere gentem—So vast were the efforts requisite to the establishment of the Roman name." Virg. But the nation of Israel had no such care taken of it, no such pains taken with it, as Athens
Spars, Rome, and other commonwealths, had when they were first founded, but, on the contrary, was doomed to destruction, like an infant new-born, exposed to wind and weather, the navel-string not cut, the poor babe not washed, not clothed, not swaddled, because not fitted, v. 4, 5. Note, We girded said he, and seemed dignified, I, and there were no ornaments on our infant-lives to the natural pity and compassion which the God of nature has put into the hearts of parents and nurses toward new-born children. This infant is said to be cast out, to the lothing of her person: it was a sign that she was hated by those that bare her, and she appeared hitherto to all that looked upon her. The first time possess an opinion of the Egyptians, as we find, Gen. xxii. 32.—xlvi. 34.

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

6. And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, Live. 7. I have caused thee to multiply as the bud of the field, and thou hast increased and waxen great, and thou art come to excellent ornaments: thy breasts are fashioned, and thy hair is grown, whereas thou wast naked and bare. 8. Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I swear unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine. 9. Then washed I thee with water; yea, I thoroughly washed away thy blood from thee, and I anointed thee with oil. 10. I clothed thee also with broderied work, and shod thee with badgers' skin, and girded thee about with fine linen, and I covered thee with silk. 11. I decked thee also with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon thy hands, and a chain on thy neck. 12. And I put a jewel on thy forehead, and ear-rings in thine ears, and a beautiful crown upon thy head. 13. Thus wast thou decked with gold and silver; and thy raiment was of fine linen, and silk and brodered work: thou didst eat fine flour, and honey, and oil; and thou wast exceeding beautiful, and thou didst prosper in a kingdom. 14. And thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty: for it was perfect through the comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord God.

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

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

2. He looked upon them with kindness and a tender affection, not only pitted them, but set his love upon them, which was unaccountable, for there was nothing lovely in them; but I looked upon thee and beheld, thy beauty was the time of love, v. 8. I sinned Christ to redeem us, that sends the Spirit to sanctify us, that brought us out of a state of nature into a state of grace; that was a time of love indeed, distinguishing love, when God manifested his love to us, and courted our love to him: Then was I in his eyes as one that found favour, Cant. viii. 7.

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

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

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

6. He admitted them into covenant with himself. See what glorious nuptials this poor forlorn infant is preferred to at last! How is she dignified, who a
first had scarcely her life given her for a prey; I swore unto thee, and entered into covenant with thee; this was done at Mount Sinai, when the covenant between God and Israel was sealed and ratified, then thou hast transgressed, God called them his people, and himself the God of Israel. Note, Those to whom God gives spiritual life he takes into covenant with himself; by that covenant they become his subjects and servants, that intimates their duty; his portion, his treasure, that intimates their privilege: and it is confirmed with an oath, that we might have strong consolation.

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

8. He fed them with abundance, with plenty, with dainties; Thou didst eat fat from the finest flesh, and drink wine in maundies and skins, honey out of the rock, oil out of the flinty rock. In Canaan they did eat bread to the full, the finest of the wheat, Deut. xxvii. 13, 14. Those whom God takes into covenant with himself are fed with the bread of life, clothed with the robe of righteousness, adorned with the graces and comforts of the spirit; the hidden man of the heart is that which is incorruptible.

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

15. But thou didst trust in thine own beauty, and playedst the harlot because of thy renown, and pouredst out thy fornications on every one that passed by; his it was. 16. And of thy garments thou didst take, and deckedst thy high places with divers colours, and playedst the harlot thereupon: the like things shall not come, neither shall it be so. 17. Thou hast also taken thy fair jewels of my gold and of my silver, which I had given thee, and madest to thyself images of men, and didst commit whoredom with them; 18. And tookest thy brodered garments, and coveredst them; and thou hast set mine oil and mine incense before them. 19. My meat also which I gave thee, fine flour, and oil, and bough, wherewith I fed thee, thou hast even set it before them for a sweet savour; and thus it was, saith the Lord God. 20. Moreover, thou hast taken thy sons and thy daughters, whom thou hast borne unto me, and those hast thou sacrificed unto them to be devoured. Is this of thy whoredoms a small matter? 21. That thou hast slain my children, and delivered them to cause them to pass through the fire for them? And in all thine abominations and thy whoredoms thou hast not remembered the days of thy youth, when thou wast naked and bare, and wast polluted in thy blood. 23. And it came to pass, after all thy wickedness, (wo, wo unto thee! saith the Lord God,) 24. That thou hast also built unto thee an eminent place, and hast made thee a high place in every street. 25. Thou hast built thy high place at every head of the way, and hast made thy beauty to be abhorred, and hast opened thy feet to every one that passed by, and multiplied thy whoredoms. 26. Thou hast also committed fornication with the Egyptians thy neighbours, great of flesh; and hast increased thy whoredoms, to provoke me to anger. 27. Behold, therefore, I have stretched out my hand over thee, and have diminished thine ordinary food, and delivered thee unto the will of them that hate thee, the daughters of the Philistines, which are ashamed of thy lewd way. 28. Thou hast played the whore also with the Assyrians, because thou wast unsatable; yea, thou hast played the harlot with them, and yet couldst not be satisfied. 29. Thou hast, moreover, multiplied thy fornication in the land of Canaan unto Chaldea, and yet thou
wast not satisfied herewith. 30. How weak is thy heart, saith the Lord God, seeing thou dost all these things, the work of an imperious whorish woman? 31. In that thou buildest thine eminent place in the head of every way, and makest thy high place in every street; and hast not been as a harlot, in that thou worst hire; 32. But as a wife that committeth adultery, which taketh strangers instead of her husband! 33. They give gifts to all whores; but thou givest thy gifts to all thy lovers, and hirest them, that they may come unto thee on every side for thy whoredom. 34. And the contrary is in thee from other women in thy whoredoms, whereas none followeth thee to commit whoredoms: and in that thou givest a reward, and no reward is given unto thee; therefore thou art contrary.

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

1. Their idolatry was the great prevailing sin that they were beheld of it, in close, in the latter end of Solomon's time, (for from Samuel's till then I do not remember that we read any thing of it,) and from thence continued more or less the crying sin of that nation till the captivity; and though it now and then met with some check from the reforming kings, yet it was never totally suppressed, and for the most part appeared to a high degree impudent and flagrant. They were not only not ashamed of the true God by images, as the ten tribes by the calves at Dan and Bethel, but they worshipped false gods, Baal and Moloch, and all the senseless rubbish of the pagan deities. 11. This is that which is here all along represented (as often elsewhere) under the similitude of whoredom and adultery. 1. Because it is the violation of a marriage-covenant with God, forsaking him, and embracing the bosom of a stranger; it is giving that affection and that service to his rivals, which are due to him alone. 2. Because it is the corrupting and defiling of the mind, and the enslaving of the spiritual part of the man, and subjecting it to the power and dominion of sense, as whoredom is. 3. Because it debases the conscience, and makes their idolatry dishonour the divine nature, and change the truth of God into a lie, and his glory into shame, God justly punishes by giving them over to a reprobate mind to dishonour the human nature with vile affections, Rom. i. 23, &c. It is a besetting, bewitching sin; and when men are given up to it, they seldom recover themselves out of the snare. 4. Because it is a shameful, scandalous sin, for those that have joined themselves to the Lord, to join themselves to an idol. Now observe here, (1.) What were the causes of this sin; how came the people of God to be drawn away to the service of idols? How came a virgin so well taught, so well educated, to be debauched? Who would have thought it? But, [1.] They grew proud; (v. 18.)

"Thou trustedst to thy beauty, and didst expect that that should make thee an interest, and didst play the harlot because of thy renown." They thought, because they were so complimented, that, further to in gratiate themselves with them, and receive their compliments, they must join with them in their worship, and conform themselves to their usages. Solomon admitted idolatry to gratify his wives and their relations. Note, Abundance of young people are ruined by pride, and particularly pride in their beauty. *Rura est concordia formas aquam facilitate.* —Beauty and chastity are seldom associated. [2.] They forget their beginning. (v. 22.) "Thou hast forgotten the days of thy youth, how poor and mean and despicable thou wast, and what great things God did for thee, and what lasting obligations he laid upon thee thereof." Note, It would be an effectual check to our pride and sensuality, to consider what we are, and how much we are beholden to the free grace of God. [3.] They were weak in understanding and in resolution; (v. 30.) "How weak is thy heart, seeing thou dost all these things." Note, The strength of men's lusts is an evidence of the weakness of their hearts; they have no acquaintance with themselves, nor government of themselves. She is weak, and yet an imperious, whorish woman. Note, Those that are most foolish are commonly most imperious, and think themselves fit to control others, because they are far from being able to manage themselves.

[2.] What were the particulars of it. [1.] They worshipped all the idols that came in their way; all that they were ever courted to the worship of; they were at the beck of all their neighbours; (v. 15.) "Then pouredst out thy offerings on every one that passed by, by it was. They offered to the graven images of all sorts whatever, this kind, though ever so absurd. No foreign idol could be imported, no new god invented, but they were ready to catch at it; as a common strumpet that prostitutes herself to all new comers, and multifies her whoredoms, v. 23. Thus some common drunkards will be company for every one that puts up the finger to them; how weak are the hearts of souls! [2.] They adorned their idol-temples, and groves, and high places, with the fine, rich clothing that God had given them; (v. 16, 18.) "Then deckedst thy high places with divers colours, with the coats of divers colours, like Joseph's, which God had given them as particular marks of his favour, and hast played the harlot, worshipped idols thereupon; of this he saith, The like things shall not come; neither shall it be so; this is a thing by no means to be suffered; I will never endure such practices as these without showing my retentions." [3.] They made images for worship of the jewels which God had given them; (v. 17.) "the jewels of my gold and my silver, which I had given thee.

Note, It is God that gives us our gold and silver; it is the preciousness of gifts that are from God, who are the gifts of God's providence to us, as well as the fruits of the earth. And what God gives us the use of he still retains a property in; it is my silver and my gold, though I have given it thee. It is his still, that we ought to serve and honour him with it, and are accountable to him for the disposal of it. Every thing has an owner, whether it be a jewel or a spar, Should we make our silver and gold, our plate, money, jewels, the matter of our pride and contention, our covetousness and prodigality, if we duly considered that it is God's silver and his gold? The Israelites began betimes to turn their jewels into idols, when Aaron made the golden calf of their car-rings.

[4.] They served their idols with the good things
which God gave them for their own use, and to serve him with; (v. 18.) "Thou hast set mine oil and fine flour upon their altars, as perfumes to these dunghill defiles, and to make fine flour, and oil, and that honey which Canaan flowed with, and wherewith I fed thee, thou hast regaled them and their hungry priests with; hast made an offering of it to them for a sweet savour, to purify them, and procure acceptance with them: and thus it was, saith the Lord God; it is too pitiless and unmerciful to be excused. These things thou hast done. He that hath the grace and power to know it." See how fond they were of their idols, that they would part with what that was given them for the necessary subsistence of themselves and their families, to honour them with; which may shame our niggardliness and strait-handedness in the service of the true and living God.

[5.] They had sacrificed their children to their idols. This is insisted upon here, and often elsewhere, as one of the worst instances of their idolatry, as indeed there was none in which the devil triumphed so much over the children of men, both their natural reason and their natural affection, as in this; (see Jer. vii. 31.—xxxix. 5.—xxxix. 33.) Thou hast taken thy sons and thy daughters, and not only made them to pass through the fire, or between two fires, for thy dead children, but also for thy living children, and hast offered up thy dead and thy living sons and daughters which thou hast borne unto me, v. 20. Never was there such an instance of the degenerating of the paternal authority into the most barbarous tyranny as this was. Yet that was not the worst of it; it was an irreparable wrong to God himself, who challenged a special property in their children more than in their gold and silver, and their meat; They are my children, (v. 21.) the sons and daughters which thou hast borne unto me, v. 20. He is the Father of spirits, and rational souls are in a particular manner his; and therefore the taking away of life, human life, unjustly, is a high affront to the God of life. But the children of Israelites were his by a further right; they were the children of the covenant, born in God's house. He had said to Abraham, I will be a God to thee and to thy seed; and they had the seal of their adoption in their flesh from eight days old: they were: to bear God's name, and keep up his church; to murder them was in the highest degree inhuman, but to murder them in honour of an idol was in the highest degree impious. One cannot think of it without the utmost indignation: to see the pitless hands of the parents shedding the guiltless blood of their own children, and by offering those pieces of themselves to the devil for dying sacrifices, openly avowing the offering up of themselves to him for living sacrifices! How absurd was this, that the children which were born to God, should be sacrificed to devils! Note, The children of parents that are members of the visible church, are to be looked upon as born unto God, and his children; as such, and under that character, we may pray for them; we may cause them to pray for us up, and, if he calls for them, cheerfully part with them to him; for may he not do what he will with his own? Upon this instance of their idolatry, which indeed ought not to pass without a particular brand, this remark is made, (v. 20.) Is this of thy worship a small matter? Which intimates, that there were those who made a small matter of it, and turned it to their own ruin. And this was so heinous, so appallingly heinous, which men of profane, fell, misconceived, will not make a mock at. But is heinous, is spiritual heinous, a small matter? Is it a small matter for men to make their children brutes, and the devil their god? It will be a great matter shortly.

[6.] They built temples in honour of their idols, that others might be invited to resort thither, and join with them in the worship of their idols; "After all thy wickedness of this kind committed in private, for which, va, va unto thee," (that comes in verse 23.) God had punished them; yet he says, they were in a worse condition, who are going on in sin, and giving them warning in time, if they would but take it,) "thou hast at length arrived at such a pitch of impudence as to proclaim it; thou hast long had a whore's heart, but now thou art come to have a whore's forefront, and cannot but blush," v. 23.—25. Thou hast build there an eminent place, a brothel-house; and even them that had courted them to it, finding themselves undone by them, began to be satisfied with the abundance and violence of their idolatries; Thou hast made thy beauty to be abhorred, even by those that had admired it. The Jewish nation, by leaving their own God, and doting on the gods of the nations round about them, had made themselves mean and despisable in the eyes even of their heathen masters; and such was their wickedness, that the idols were. Thou hast made thee a high place, for one idol or other, in every street, and at every head of the way; and again, v. 31. They did all they could to seduce and debauch others, and to spread the contagion, by making the temptations to idolatry as strong as possibly they could: and hereby the ringleaders in idolatry did but make themselves vile, and even them that had courted them to it, finding themselves undone by them, began to be satisfied with the abundance and violence of their idolatries; Thou hast made thy beauty to be abhorred, even by those that had admired it. The Jewish nation, by leaving their own God, and doting on the gods of the nations round about them, had made themselves mean and despisable in the eyes even of their heathen masters; and such was their wickedness, that the idolaters were.

[3.] What were the aggravations of this sin.

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

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

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

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

35. Wherefore, O harlot, hear the word of the Lord: 36. Thus saith the Lord God, Because thy filthiness was poured out, and thy nakedness discovered through thy whoredoms with thy lovers, and with all the idols of thine abominations, and by the blood of thy children, which thou didst give unto them: 37. Behold, therefore, I will gather all thy lovers, with whom thou hast taken pleasure, and all them that thou hast loved, with all them that thou hast hated, I will even gather them round about against thee, and will discover thy nakedness unto them, that they may see all thy nakedness.

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

Abolition was by the law of Moses made a capital crime; this notorious adultery, the criminal at the bar, being in the foregoing verses found guilty, here has sentence passed upon her. It is ushered in with solemnity, v. 35. The prophet, as the judge, in God's name calls to her, O harlot, hear the word of the Lord. Our Saviour preached to harlots for their conversion, to bring them into the kingdom of God, not as the prophet here, to expel them out of it. Note, An apostate church is a harlot; Jerusalem is so, if she become idolatrous. How is the faithful city become a harlot! Rome is so represented in the Revelation, then when it is marked for ruin, as Jerusalem here; (Rev. xvii. 1.) Come, and I will show thee the judgments of the great whore. Those who will not hear the commanding word of the Lord and obey it, shall be made to hear the condemning word of the Lord and shall all tremble at it. Let us attend while judgment is given. 1. The crime is repeated, and the articles of the charge are summed up, (v. 36.) and (as is usual) with the attendant aggravations; (v. 43.) for when God speaks in wrath, he will be justified, and clear when he judges, clear when he is judged; and sinners, when they are condemned, shall hear their sins so set in order before them, that their mouth shall be stopped, and they shall not have a word to object against the equity of the sentence. The crimes which this harlot stands convicted of, and is now to be condemned for, are, 1. The violation of the two first commandments of the first table, by idolatry; which is here called her whoredoms with her lovers: so she called them, (Hos. ii. 12.) because she loved them as if they had been indeed her benefactors; that is, with all the idols of her
abominations, the abominable idols which she served and worshipped. This was the sin which provoked God to jealousy. 2. The violation of the two first commandments of the second table, by the murder of their own innocent infants; the blood of thy children which they have shed to the Lord, in a strange manner of those that have cast off God and his fear, break through the strongest and most sacred bonds of natural affection.

The sins are aggravated from the consideration, (1.) Of the dishonour they had thereby done to themselves; "Hereby thy filthiness was poured out; the uncleanness that was in thy heart was hereby discovered and brought to light, and thy nakedness was found abroad for all to see and to be in contempt." God is displeased with his professing people for shameing themselves by their sins. (2.) Their base ingratitude is another aggravation of their sins; "Thou hast not remembered the days of thy youth, and the kindness that was done thee then, when otherwise thou hadst perished," v. 43.

And, (3.) The vexation which their sins gave to God, whom they ought to have pleased; "Thou hast fretted me in all these things; not only angered me, but grieved me." It is a strange expression, and, one would think, enough to melt a heart of stone, that the great God, who cannot admit any uncleaness, is pleased to speak of the sins and follies of his professing people as fretting him. Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, v. 42.

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

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

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

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

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

Then the both the sin and the sinners shall be abolished together, and the sin shall be put to both; Thou shalt cease from playing the harlot; there shall be no remainders of idolatry in the land, because the inhabitants shall be wholly extirpated, and they shall give no more hire, because they have no more to give. Some that will not leave their sins, live till their sins leave them. When all that with which they honoured their idols is taken from them, they shall not be able to worship God, as they will do with false gods, (11. 4.) Thou shalt not commit this lewdness of sacrificing thy children, which was a crime provoking above all thine abominations, for thy children shall all be cut off by the sword, or carried into captivity, so that thou shalt have none to sacrifice," v. 43. Or, it may be meant of the reformation of some of them, that escape and survive the punishment; they shall be the means of God's mercy upon the other.

The captivity in Babylon made the people of Israel cease for ever from playing the harlot, it effectually cured them of their inclination to idolatry; and then all shall be well, when this is the fruit, even the taking away of sin; then (v. 42.) my jealousy shall depart, I will be quiet, and no more angry. When we begin to be at war with sin, God will be peace with us; for he continues the affliction no longer than till it has done its work. When sin departs, God's jealousy will soon depart, for he is never jealous but when we give him just cause to be so. Yet some understand this as a threatening of utter ruin, that God will make a full end, and the fire of his anger shall burn as long as there is any fuel for it. His fury shall rest upon them, and not cease any more; (v. 43.) They shall be consumed, with all that is therein; (John iii. 36.) The wrath of God abideth on them. They shall drink the dregs of the cup, and then God will be no more angry, for he is eased of his adversaries, (Isa. i. 24.) is satisfied in the abandoning of them, and therefore will be no more angry, because there are no more for his anger to fasten upon. They had fretted him, when judgment and calamities followed; but now that quiet, when he will be in the eternal damnation of sinners, wherein he will be glorified, and therefore he will be satisfied.

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

45.
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hast they, be thou confounded also, and bear thy shame, in that thou hast justified thy sisters. 53. When I shall bring again their captivity, the captivity of Sodom and her daughters, and the captivity of Samaria and her daughters, then will I bring again the captivity of the captives in the midst of them; 54. That thou mayest bear thine own shame, and mayest be confounded in all that thou hast done, in that thou art a comfort unto them. 55. When thy sisters, Sodom and her daughters, shall return to their former estate, and Samaria and her daughters shall return to their former estate, then thou and thy daughters shall return to your former estate. 56. For thy sister Sodom was not mentioned by thy mouth in the day of thy pride. 57. Before the wickedness was discovered, as at the time of thy reproach of the daughters of Syria, and all that are round about her, the daughters of the Philistines, which despise thee round about. 58. Thou hast borne thy lewdness and thine abominations, saith the Lord. 59. For thus saith the Lord God, I will even deal with thee as thou hast done, which hast despised the oath in breaking the covenant.

The prophecy here further shows Jerusalem her abominations, by comparing her with those places that had gone before her, and showing that she was worse than any of them; and therefore should, like them, be utterly and irreparably ruined. We are appealing to the judgment of others by comparison, and to the natural conscience of man, to make known that we are sufficiently abominable in our sins, as good as such and such, who are thought passable; or that we are not dangerously bad, if we are no worse than such and such, who, though bad, are not of the worst. Now God by the prophet shows Jerusalem, 1. That she was as bad as her mother, as the accursed daughters of Canaanites, that were the possessors of this land, as v. 48. That she that useeth proverbs, as most people do, shall apply that proverb to Jerusalem, As is the mother, so is her daughter, v. 44. She is even her mother's own child; the Jews are as like the Canaanites in temper and inclination as if they had been their own children. The character of the mother was, that she loathed her husband and her children; she had all the marks of an adulteress; and that is the character of the daughter, she forsakes the Guide of her youth, and is barbarous to the children of her own bowels. When God brought Israel into Canaan, he particularly warned them not to do according to the abominations of the men of that land, who went before them, (for which it had smitten them out, Lev. xviii. 27, 28,) the monuments of whose idolatry, with the remains of the idolaters themselves, were so prevalent, that the continual temptation to them: but they learned this as they walked in their steps, and were as well affected to the idols of Canaan as ever they were, (Ps. cxi. 38.) and thus, in respect of imitation, it might truly be said that their mother was a Hittite, and their father an Amorite, (v. 45.) for they resembled them more than Abraham and Sarah.

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

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

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

(2.) Gluttony, here called fulness of bread. It was
God's great mercy that they had plenty, but their
great sin that they abused it, glutted themselves
with it, ate to excess, and drank to excess, and made
that the gratification of their lusts, which was given
them to be the support of their lives. (3.) Idleness, and
uselessness. They did nothing, but mere idleness,
and unprofitable idleness was a sin, and, as
Ezek. iii. 15. (4.) Oppression, neither did she strengthen the
hands of the poor and needy; probably, it is implied
that they were cruelly oppressed, and broken them
worse; however, it was had enough that, when she had so
much wealth, and, consequently, power and interest
and leisure, she did nothing for the relief of the poor,
in providing for whose wants those that themselves
are full of bread may employ their time well, they
need not be so abundantly idle, as too often they are.
These were the sins of the Sodomites, and these
were Jerusalem's sins; their pride, the cause of their
sins, (v. 50.) they were haughty; with the horrid effects of their sins, their abomina-
tions which they committed before God. Men ar-
rive gradually at the height of impiety and wicked-
ness; Nemo reperit fit turpissimius—No man
reaches the height of vice at once. But where pride
has got the ascendant in a man, he is in the high
road to all abominations.

3. How much the sins of Jerusalem exceeded
those of Sodom and Samaria; they were more hein-
sious in the sight of God, either in themselves, or by
reason of several aggravations: "Thou hast not only
walked after their ways, and tread in their steps, but
hast quite outdone them in wickedness," v. 47. Then
thoughtest it a very little thing to do as they did;
didst laugh at them as sneaking sinners, and silly
credulous people; they were despised in Sodom, for
dishableness in wickedness; wouldst thou more boldly over
thy convictions, and bid more open defiance to God
and religion; if a man will break, let him break
for something; thus thou wast corrupted more than
they in all thy ways." Jerusalem was more polite;
and therefore sinned with more wit, more art and
ingenuity, than Sodom and Samaria could. Jerusa-
muth, had more wealth and power, and its government
was more absolute and arbitrary; and therefore had
the more opportunity of oppressing the poor, and
sh edding malignant influences around her, than
Sodom and Samaria had. Jerusalem had the temple,
and the ark, and the priesthood, and kings of the
house of David; and therefore the wickedness of that
holy city, that was so digested, so near, so dear to
God, was more watched against than its more great-
ness of Sodom and Samaria, that had not Jerusalem's
privileges and means of grace. Sodom has not done as thou hast done, v. 48. This agrees with
what Christ says, (Matt. xi. 24.) it shall be more
tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judg-
ment than for thee. The kingdom of the ten tribes
had been very wicked; and yet Samaria has not
come off so little. Before they made the sin worse,
they shipped half so many idols, nor slain half so many
prophets. It was bad enough that they of Jerusalem
were guilty of Sodom's sins, sodomy itself not ex-
cepted, 1 Kings xiv. 24. 2 Kings xxiii. 7. And

though the Dead sea, the standing monument of So-
dom's sin and ruin, bordered upon their country,
(Numb. xxxiv. 12.) and that sulphurous lake was
always under their nose, (God having taken away
Sodom and her daughters in such a way and manner
as he saw good, (as he says here, v. 50.) so that one
thing should effectually make their overthrown en-
barrass the sight of them,) yet they did not take
notice of it, but mul-
tiplied their abominations more than they; and, (1.) By this they justified Sodom and Samaria, v. 51.
They pretended, in their haughtiness and superci-
ionsness, to judge them, and in the days of old, when
they retained their integrity, they did judge them,
v. 52. But now they justify them comparatively;
Sodom and Samaria were worse than Jerusalem,
and less wicked. It will look like some extenua-
tion of their sins, that, bad as they were, Jerusalem was
worse, though it was God's own city. Not that it
will serve for a plea to justify Sodom, but it con-
demns Jerusalem, against which Sodom and Samari-
ia will rise up in judgment. (2.) For this they
ought themselves to be greatly ashamed: "Thou
and I hast not committed, and bear thy shame, take
the shame to thyself that is due to them, it is
hoped that sinners will forsake their sins when they
begin to be heartily ashamed of them. And there
fore they shall go into captivity, and there they shall
lie, that they may be confounded in all that they
have done; because they had been a comfort and
encouragement to Sodom and Samaria, v. 54. Note,
There is nothing in sin which we have more rea
son to be ashamed of than this, that, by our sin we have
encouraged others in sin, and comforted them in their
actions, for which they must be grieved, or they are undone.
Another reason why they must now be ashamed
is, because in the day of their prosperity they had
looked with so much disdain upon their neighbours;
Thy sister Sodom was not mentioned by thee in the
day of thy pride, v. 56. They thought Sodom not
worthy to be named the same day with Jerusalem,
merely because they were despised, and had fallen
under a worse and more scandalous character than
Sodom herself. Those that are high may perhaps
come to stand upon a level with those they contemn.
Or, "Sodom was not mentioned, the warning de-
signed to be given to thee by Sodom's ruin, was not
regarded." If the Jews had but talked more fre-
cently and seriously to one another, and to their
children, concerning the wrath of God revealed from
heaven against Sodom's ungodliness and unrighte-
ousness, it might have kept them in awe, and
prevented their treasuring in their steps; but they kept
the thought of it at heart, would not bear the
mention of it, and (as the ancients say) put Isaiah
to death for putting them in mind of it, when he
called them sisters of Sodom and people of Gomorrah,
Isa. i. 10. Note, The Jews were not so bad as
other wicked nations, yet they were by no means
preparing judgments for themselves, that will not take notice of God's judgments upon others.

4. What desolations God had brought, and was
bringing, upon Jerusalem, for these wickednesses
wherein they had exceeded Sodom and Samaria.
(1.) She has already long ago been disgraced, and
has fallen into contempt among her neighbours; (v.
16.) She is now the contempt of her children. Con
sidering these acts of God revealed from
heaven against Sodom's ungodliness and unrighte-
ousness, it might have kept them in awe, and
prevented their treasuring in their steps; but they kept
the thought of it at heart, would not bear the
mention of it, and (as the ancients say) put Isaiah
to death for putting them in mind of it, when he
called them sisters of Sodom and people of Gomorrah.
times, who were said to despise her, and be ashamed of her, (v. 27) and under the reproach of all that were round about her; which seems to refer to the descent made upon Judah by the Syrians in the days of Alazan, and soon after another by the Philistines, (2 Chron. xxviii. 3, 18. Note, Those that despise others by yielding to their lusts, will justly be brought into disgrace by being made to yield to their enemies; and it is observable, that before God brought potent enemies upon them, for their destruction, he brought enemies upon them that were less formidable, for their reproof; if lesser judgments would do the work, God would not choose greater. In this thou hast borne thy lendness, v. 38. Those that will not cast off their sins by repentance and reformation, shall be made to bear their sins to their confusion. (2.) She is now in captivity, or hastening into captivity, and therein is reckoned with, not only for her lendness, (v. 38.) but for her perfidiousness and covenant-breaking; (v. 39.) I will deal with thee as thou hast done; I will forsake thee as thou hast forsaken me, and cast thee off as thou hast cast me off, for thou hast despised the oath, in breaking the covenant. This seems to be meant of the covenant God made with their fathers, at Mount Sinai, whereby he took them and theirs to be a peculiar people to himself. They flattered themselves with a conceit, that because God had hitherto continued his favour to them, they stood upon their provocations, he would do so still. "No," says God, "you have broken covenant with me, have despised both the promises of the covenant, and the obligations of it, and therefore I will deal with thee as thou hast done." Note, Those that will not adhere to God as their God, have no reason to expect that he should continue to own them as his people. (3.) The captivity of the wicked, as a sign of God's reproof, shall be as irrevocable as that of Sodom and Samaria. In this sense, as a threatening, most interpreters take v. 53, 55. When I shall bring again the captivity of Sodom and Samaria, and when they shall return to their former estate, then I will bring again the captivity of thy captives in the midst of them, and as it were for their sakes, and under their shadow and protection, because they are more righteous than thou, and then thou shalt return to thy former estate. But Sodom and Samaria were never brought back, nor ever returned to their former estate, and therefore let not Jerusalem expect it, that is, those who now remained there, whom God would deliver to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth for their hurt, Jer. xxix. 10. Sooner shall the Sodomites arise out of the salt sea, and the Samaritans return out of the land of Assyria, than they enjoy their peace and prosperity again; for, to their shame be it spoken, it is a comfort to those of the ten tribes, who are dispersed and in captivity, to see those of the two tribes, who had been as bad as they, or worse, in like manner dispersed and in captivity; and therefore they shall live and the ten tribes shall be preserved in the midst of them, and the good ones of both shall perish together, the good ones of both shall return together. Note, Those who do as the worst of sinners do, must expect to fare as they fare. Let mine enemy be as the wicked. 60. Nevertheless, I will remember my covenant with thee in the days of thy youth, and I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant. 61. Then shalt thou remember thy ways and be ashamed, when thou shalt receive thy sisters, thine elder and thy younger; and I will give them unto thee for daughters, but not by thy covenant. And I will establish my covenant with thee, and thou shalt know that I am the Lord. 63. That thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God.

Here, in the close of the chapter, after a most shameful conviction of sin, and a most dreadful denunciation of judgments, mercy is remembered, mercy is reserved, for those who shall come after, as was when God swears in the wrath concerning those who came out of Egypt, that they should not enter into Canaan, (v. 44.) "Yet," says God, "your little ones shall;" so here. And some think that what is said of the return of Sodom and Samaria, (v. 53, 55.) and of Jerusalem with them, is a promise; it may be understood so, if by Sodom we understand (as Grotius and some of the Jewish writers do) the Moabites and Ammonites, the posterity of Lot, who once dwelt in Sodom; their captivity was returned, Jer. xxix. 10. and xxxiv. 4.) as was that of many of the ten tribes, and Judah's with them. But these closing verses are, without doubt, a precious promise, which was in part fulfilled at the return of the penitent and reformed Jews out of Babylon, but was to have its full accomplishment in gospel-times, and in that repentance and that remission of sins which should then be preached with success to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. Now observe here,

1. From whence this mercy should take rise; from God himself, and his remembering of his covenant with them; (v. 60.) Nevertheless, though they had been so provoking, and God has been so provoked, to that degree that one would think they could never be reconciled again, yet I will remember my covenant with thee, that covenant which was made with thee in the days of thy youth, and will revive it again. Though thou hast broken the covenant, (v. 59.) I will remember it, and it shall flourish again. See how much it is our comfort and advantage that God is pleased to deal with us in a covenant-way, for thus the mercies of it come to be sure mercies and everlasting, (Isa. lv. 5.) and while we do not set up, in the least, our own tree, though it be cut down, that through the scent of water it will bud again. We do not find that they put him in mind of the covenant, but ex nullo motu—from his own mere good pleasure, he remembers it as he had promised; (Lev. xxvi. 42.) Then will I remember my covenant, and will remember the land. He that bids us to be ever mindful of the covenant, no doubt will himself be ever mindful of it, the word which he commanded (and what he commands stands fast for ever) to a thousand generations. 2. How they should be prepared and qualified for this mercy; (v. 61.) Thou shalt remember thy ways, thine evil ways; God will put thee in mind of them, when he put them in order before that; that we may be ashamed of them." Note, God's good work in us commences and keeps pace with his good will towards us. When he remembers his covenant for us, that he may not remember our sins against us, he puts us upon remembering of our sins against ourselves. And if we will but be brought to remember our ways, how crooked and perverse they are, and how we have walked contrary to God in them, we cannot but be ashamed; and when we are so, we are best prepared to receive the honour and comfort of a sealed pardon and a settled peace. 3. What the mercy is, that God has in reserve for them. (1.) He will take them into covenant
with himself; (v. 60.) I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant; and again, (v. 62.) I will establish, re-establish, and establish more firmly than ever, my covenant with thee. Note. It is an unspeakable comfort to true repentants, that this covenant of grace is so well ordered in all things, that every transgression in the covenant does not throw us out of covenant, for that is inviolable. (2.) He will bring the Gentiles into church-communication with them; (v. 61.) "Thou shalt receive thy sisters, the Gentile nations that are round about thee, thine elder and thy younger, greater than thou art, and lesser, ancient nations and moderns also, and will give them unto thee for daughters, they shall be founded, nursed, taught, and educated, by that gospel, that word of the Lord, which shall go forth from Zion and from Jerusalem; so that all the neighbours shall call Jerusalem mother, while the church continues there, and shall acknowledge the Jerusalem which is from above, and which is free, to be the mother of us all, Gal. iv. 26. They shall be thy daughters, but not by thy covenant, not by the covenant of peculiarity, not as being proselytes to the Jewish religion, and subjects to the yoke of the ceremonial law, but as being converts with thee to the Christian religion." Or, Not by thy covenant, may mean, "not upon such terms as thou shalt think fit to impose upon them as conquered nations, as captives and homagers to whom thou mayst give law at pleasure;" (such as the nation as the nations of the nations;) "no, they shall be thy daughters by my covenant, the covenant of grace made with thee and them in concert, as an indenture tripartite. I will be a Father, a common Father, both to Jews and Gentiles, and so they shall become sisters to one another. And when thou shalt receive them, thou shalt be ashamed of thine own evil ways whereby thou wast confounded to the face of the nations; thou wilt look to the face, remembering how much worse than the Gentiles thou wast in the day of thine apostacy." 4. What the fruit and effect of this will be. (1.) God will hereby be glorified; (v. 62.) Thou shalt know that I am the Lord. It shall hereby be known that the God of Israel is Jehovah, a God of power, and faithful to his covenant; and thou shalt know it, who has found thee out of the earth, and known thee. It had often been said in wrath, Ye shall know that I am the Lord, shall know it to your cost; here it is said in mercy, Ye shall know it to your comfort; and it is one of the most precious promises of the new covenant which God has made with us, that all shall know him from the least to the greatest. (2.) They shall hereby be more humbled and ashamed for sin; (v. 63.) "That thou mayest be the more confounded at the remembrance of all that thou hast done amiss, mayest reproach thyself for it, and call thyself a thousand times unwise, unfruitful, ungrateful, and unlike what thou wast, and mayest never open thy mouth any more in contradiction to God, reflection on him, or complaints of him, but mayest be for ever silent and submissive, because of thy shame." Note. Those that right well remember their sins, will be truly ashamed of them; and those that are truly ashamed of their sins, will see great reason to be patient under their afflictions; to be dumb, and not open their mouths against what God does. But that which is most observable is, that all this shall be when I am justified toward thee, saith the Lord God. Note. It is the gracious clemency of true repentants, that the clearer evidences and the fuller instances they have of God's being reconciled to them, the more grieved and ashamed they are, that ever they have offended. God is in Jesus Christ justified toward us; he is our Peace, and it is by his cross that we are reconciled, and in his gospel that God is reconciling the world to himself; now the consideration of this should be powerful to melt our hearts into a godly sorrow for sin. This is repeating because the kingdom of heaven is at hand. The prodigal, after he had received the kiss which assured him that his father was justified toward him, was ashamed and confounded, and said, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee. And the more our shame for sin is increased by the sense of pardoning mercy, the more will our comfort in God be increased.

CHAP. XVII.

God was, in the foregoing chapter, reckoning with the people of Judah and bringing ruin upon them, for their treachery in breaking covenant with him. In this chapter he is reckoning with the king of Judah, for his treachery in breaking covenant with the king of Babylon; for when God came to contend with them, he found many grounds of his controversy. The thing was now in doing; Zedekiah was practising with the king of Egypt underhand for assistance in a treacherous project he had formed to shake off the yoke of the king of Babylon, and violate the homage and trinity he had sworn to him. For this, God by the prophet here. 1. Threatens the ruin of him and his kingdom, by a parable of two eagles and a vine, (v. 1. 10.) and the explanation of that parable, (v. 11. 24.) and 2. The announcement that the king shall offer to raise the royal family of Judah again, the house of David, in the Messiah and his kingdom, v. 22. 34.

1. And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, put forth a riddle, and speak a parable unto the house of Israel; 3. And say, Thus saith the Lord God, A great eagle with great wings, long-winged, full of feathers, which had divers colours, came unto Lebanon, and took the highest branch of the cedar: 4. He cropped off the top of his young twigs, and carried it into a land of traffic; he set it in a city of merchants. 5. He took also of the seed of the land, and planted it in a fruitful field; he placed it by great waters, and set it as a willow-tree; 6. And it grew, and became a spreading vine of low stature, whose branches turned toward him, and the roots thereof were under him; so it became a vine, and brought forth branches, and shot forth sprigs. 7. There was also another great eagle with great wings and many feathers; and, behold, this vine did bend her roots toward him, and shot forth her branches toward him, that he might water it by the furrows of her plantation. 8. It was planted in a good soil by great waters, that it might bring forth branches, and that it might bear fruit, that it might be a goodly vine. 9. Say thou, Thus saith the Lord God, Shall it prosper? shall he not pull up the roots thereof, and cut off the fruit thereof, that it wither? it shall wither in all the leaves of her spring, even without great power, or many people to pluck it up by the roots thereof. 10. Yea, behold, being planted, shall it prosper? shall it not utterly wither when the east wind toucheth it? it shall wither in the furrows where it grew. 11. Moreover, the word of
the Lord came unto me, saying, 12. Say now to the rebellious house, Know ye not what these things mean? tell them, Behold, the king of Babylon is come to Jerusalem, and hath taken the king thereof, and the princes thereof, and led them with him to Babylon: 13. And hath taken of the king’s seed, and made a covenant with him, and hath taken an oath of him: he hath also taken of the mighty of the land: 14. That the kingdom might be base, that it might not lift itself up, but that by keeping of his covenant it might stand. 15. But he rebelled against him, in sending his ambassadors into Egypt, that they might give him horses and much people. Shall he prosper? shall he escape that doeth such things? or shall he break the covenant, and be delivered? 16. As I live, saith the Lord Go, surely in the place where the king dwelteth that made him king, whose oath he despised, and whose covenant he brake, even with him, in the midst of Babylon, he shall die. 17. Neither shall Pharaoh with his mighty army and great company, make for him in the war, by casting up mounts, and building forts, to cut off many persons: 18. Seeing he despised the oath by breaking the covenant, when, lo, he had given his hand, and hath done all these things, he shall not escape. 19. Therefore thus saith the Lord Go, As I live, surely mine oath that he hath despised, and my covenant that he hath broken, even it will I recompense upon his own head. 20. And I will spread my net upon him, and he shall be taken in my snare; and I will bring him to Babylon, and will plead with him there for his trespass that he hath trespassed against me. 21. And all his fugitives, with all his bands, shall fall by the sword, and they that remain shall be scattered towards all winds; and ye shall know that I the Lord have spoken it.

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

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

Note, Ministers should study to find out acceptable words, and try various methods to do good; and, as far as they have reason to think will be for edification, should both bring that which is familiar into their preaching, and their preaching too into their familiar discourses; that there may not be so vast a dissimilarity as with some there is between what they say in theory, and what they say in practice.

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

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

1. Nebuchadnezzar had some time ago carried off Jehoiachin, the same that was called Jeconiah, when he was but eighteen years of age, and bad reigned in Jerusalem but three months, him and his princes and great men, and had brought them captives to Babylon, 2 Kings xxiv. 12. This in the parable is a king, is said to be stripped of the top and tender branch of a cedar, and is cast into a land of traffic, a city of merchants, (v. 3, 4.) which is explained, v. 12. The king of Babylon took the king of Judah’s house, who was no more able to resist him than a young twig of a tree is to contend with the strongest bird of prey, that easily crops it off, perhaps toward the making of her nest. Nebuchadnezzar, in Daniel’s vision, is a king, the king of beasts; (Dan. vii. 4.) there he has eagle’s wings, so swift were his motions, so speedy were his conquests. Here, in this parable, he is an eagle, the king of birds; a great eagle, that lives upon spoil and rapine, whose young ones suck up blood, Job xxxiii. 50. His dominion extends itself far and wide, like the great and long wings of an eagle; the people: here, are his captives, are perplexed in their motions, like the court splendid, for it has divers colours, which look like embroidering, as the word is. Jerusalem is Lebanon, a forest of houses, and very pleasant; the royal family is the cedar, Jehoiachin is the top branch, the top of the young twigs, which he crops off; Babylon is the land of traffic, and city of merchants where it is set. And the king of Judah, being of the house of David, will think himself more degraded and disgraced to be lodged among tradesmen; but he must make the best of it.

2. When he carried him to Babylon, he made his uncle Zedekiah king in his room, v. 3, 6. His name was Mattathias—the gift of the Lord, which Nebuchadnezzar changed into Zedekiah—the justice of the Lord, to reminder him that he called his, for fear of his justice. This was one of the seed of the land, a native, not a foreigner, not one of his Babylonian princes; he was planted in a fruitful field, so for Jerusalem as yet was; he placed it by great waters, where it would be likely to grow, like a willow-tree, which grows quick, and grows best in moist ground, but is never designed or expected to be a stately tree. He set him with especial circumspection; (so some read it;) he wisely provided that it might grow, but that it might not grow too big. He took of the king’s seed, (so it is explained, v. 13.) and made a covenant with him, that
he should have the kingdom, and enjoy the regal power, and dignity, provided he held it as his vassal, dependent on him, and accountable to him. He took an oath of him, made him swear allegiance to him, swear by his own God, the God of Israel, that he would be a faithful tributary to him, 2 Chron. xxxvi. 13. He also took away the mighty of the land, the chief of the men of war, partly as hostagethey, the heads of the kingdom of Babylon, that land being thereby weakened, the king might be the less able, and therefore the less in temptation, to break his league. What he designed we are told, v. 14. That the kingdom might be base, in respect both of honour and strength, might neither be a rival with its powerful neighbours, nor a terror to its feeble ones, as it had been, that it might not lift up itself against the kingdom of Babylon, and blow down any of the petty states that were in subjection to it. But yet he designed that by keeping of this covenant it might stand, and continue a kingdom. Henceby the pride and ambition of that haughty potentate would be gratified, who aimed to be the Most High, (Isa. xiv. 14.) to have all about him subject to him. Now see here,

1. How sad a change sin made with the real family of Israel! We may be now disposed to wonder that there were tributaries to that, now that has not only lost its dominion over other nations, but is itself become a tributary. How is the gold become dim! Nations by sin sell their liberty, and princes their dignity, and profane their crowns by casting them to the ground.

2. How wisely Zedekiah did for himself in accepting these terms, though they were dishonourable, when necessity brought him to it. Man may live very comfortably and contentedly, though he cannot bear a part, and make a figure, as formerly. A kingdom may stand firm and safe, though it do not stand so high as it has sometimes done; and so may a family.

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

4. Zedekiah knew not when he was well off, but grew greater in the pride of being a tributary to the king of Babylon, and, to get clear of it, entered into a private league with the king of Egypt. He had no reason to complain that the king of Babylon put any new hardships upon him, or improved his advantages against him, that he oppressed or impoverished his country, for, as the prophet had said before, (v. 6.) to aggravate his treachery, he shows again, (v. 8.) what a far way he was in to be considered: He was planted in a good soil by great waters, his family was likely enough to be built up, and his exchequer to be filled, in a little time, so that, if he had dealt faithfully, he might have been a goodly vine. But there was another great eagle that he had an affection for, and put a confidence in, and that was the king of Egypt, v. 7. Those two great potentates, the kings of Babylon and Egypt, were but two eagles, birds of prey. This great eagle of Egypt is said to have great feathers, and to sit on the ground, but that was the Babylon, because, though the kingdom of Egypt was strong, yet it was not of such a vast extent as that of Babylon was. The great eagle is said to have many feathers, much wealth, and many soldiers, which he depended upon as a substantial defence, but which really were no more than so many feathers. Zedekiah, promising himself liberty, endeavoured to make him a vassal to the king of Egypt, foolishly expecting ease by changing his master. Now this vine did secretly and underhand bend her roots toward the king of Egypt, that great eagle, and after a while did openly shoot forth her branches toward him, gave him an intimation how much she coveted an alliance with him, that he might water it by the furrows of her plantation, whereas it was planted by great waters, and did not need any assistance from him. Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon in sending his ambassadors into Egypt, that they might give him horses and much people, to enable him to contend with the king of Babylon. See what a change sin had made with the people of God! God promised that they should be a numerous people, as the sand of the sea; yet now, if their king had continued in everlasting covenant with them, they being for sin minished and brought low, Ps. cviii. 39. See also the folly of fretful, discontented spirits, that ruin themselves by striving to mend themselves, whereas they might be easy and happy enough, if they would but make the best of that which is.

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

In the explanation of the parable the sentence is very largely varied; Shall the prosper? (v. 13.) Can he expect to do ill, and fare well? Nay, shall he that does such wicked things escape? Shall he break the covenant, and be delivered from that vengeance which is the just punishment of his treachery? No, can he expect to do ill, and not suffer ill? Let him hear his doom:

(i.) It is ratified by the oath of God; (v. 16.) As I live, with the Lord God, he shall die for it. This intimates how highly God resented the crime, and how sure and severe the punishment of it would be.
God swears in his wrath, as he did, Ps. xcv. 11. Note, As God's promises are confirmed with an oath, for comfort to the saints, so are his threatenings, for terror to the wicked. As sure as God lives, and is happy, I may add, and long, so sure, so long, shall impenitent sinners die, and be miserable. [2.] It is justified by the heinousness of the crime he had been guilty of. [1.] He had been very ungrateful to his benefactor, who had made him king, and had cut off his life; and besides, he had treacherously torn his prince, when he might as easily have made him a prisoner. Note, It is a sin against God to be unkind to our friends, and to lift up the heel against those that have helped to raise us. [2.] He had been very false to him whom he had covenanted with; this is mostly insisted on. He despaired the oath when his conscience or friends reminded him of it; he had given the hand, but he would not hold it. [3.] He was a public, as well as a private, enemy to God, and his religion. Egypt He escape shall all mine agetn, and arise, and advanceth broken, and and broke it, v. 15, 16, 18, 19. He broke through it, and took a pride in making nothing of it, as a great tyrant in our own day, whose maxim (they say) it is, That princes ought not to be slaves to their word any further than is for their interest. That which aggravated Zedekiah's perfidiousness was, that the oath by which he had bound himself to the king of Babylon, was, First, A solemn oath; God's maxim in this is, v. (2.) When, he, he had given his hand, as a confederate with the king of Babylon, not only as his subject, but as his friend; the joining of hands being a token of the joining of hearts. Secondly, A sacred oath. God says, (v. 19.) It is mine oath that he has despaired, and my covenant that he has broken. In every solemn oath God is appealed to as a Witness of the sincerity of him that swears, and invocated as a Judge and Revenger of his treachery if he now swear falsely, or at any time hereafter break his oath. But the oath of allegiance to a prince is particularly called the oath of God, (Eccle. viii. 2.) as if that had something in it more sacred than another oath; for princes are ministers of God to us for good, Rom. iii. 16. Now Zedekiah's breaking this oath and covenant is the sin which God would recompense upon his own head, (v. 19.) the treachery which he has trespassed against God, for which God will plead with him, v. 20. Note, Perjury is a heinous sin, and highly provoking to the God of heaven. It would not serve for an excuse, 1. That he who took this oath was a king, a king of the house of David, whose liberty and dignity might have been set above the obligations of the oath, and the king and king, was not men to God, and not exempt from his law and judgment. The prince is doubtless as firmly bound before God to the people by his coronation-oath, as the people to the prince by the oath of allegiance. 2. Nor that this oath was sworn to the king of Babylon, a heathen prince, worse than a heretic, with whom the church of Rome says, No faith is to be kept with; nor that Nebudad-nadin was a worship- er of false gods, yet the true God will avenge this quarrel when one of his worshippers breaks his league with him; for truth is a debt owing to all men; and if the professors of the true religion deal perniciously with those of a false religion, their profession will be so far from excusing, much less justifying, them, that it aggravates their sin, and God will surely on their own heads pour out his judgments for it, and give occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme; as that Mahometan prince, who, when the Christians broke their league with him, cried out, O Jesus, are these thy Christians? Nor would it justify him, that the oath was extorted from him by a conqueror, for the covenant was made upon a wholesome consideration. He held his life and crown upon condition of an oath that he should be a true allegiance to the king of Babylon; and if he enjoy the benefit of his bargain, it is very unjust if he do not observe the terms. Let him know then that, having despised the oath, and broken the covenant, he shall not escape. And if the contempt and violation of such an oath, such a covenant as this, would be so punished, of how much sorer punishment shall they that thought worthy, who break covenant with God, (when to, they had given their hand upon it that they would be faithful,) who tread under foot the blood of that covenant as an unholy thing? (Deut. xxiv. 16.) They shall especially God's hands (v. 20.) He will now take part with the king of Babylon against him; I will spread my net upon him, v. 20. God has a net for those who deal perniciously, and think to escape his righteous judgments, in which they shall be taken and held, who would not be held by the bond of an oath and covenant. Zedekiah dreaded Babylon; God would not have it, but will take him by the hand, and lead him into his hands. God himself will now take part with the king of Babylon against him; I will spread my net upon him, v. 20. God has a net for those who deal perniciously, and think to escape his righteous judgments, in which they shall be taken and held, who would not be held by the bond of an oath and covenant. Zedekiah dreaded Babylon; God would not have it, but will take him by the hand, and lead him into his hands. Men will justly be forced upon that calamity which they endeavour by sin to free from. [2.] He had relied upon the king of Egypt, and the king of Egypt should be his infec- tual helper. Pharaoh with his mighty army shall not make for him in the war, (v. 17.) shall do him no service, nor give any check to the progress of the Chaldean forces; he shall not assist him in the siege of casting up walls and building forts, nor enable him to withstand by cutting off many persons. Note, Every creature is that to us that God makes it to be; and he commonly weakens and withers that arm of flesh which we trust in, and stay ourselves upon. Now was again fulfilled what was spoken on a former like occasion, (Isa. xxx. 7.) The Egyptians shall help in vain. They did so; for, though upon the approach of the Egyptian army, the Chaldeans withdrew from the siege of Jerusalem, upon their retreat they returned to it again, and took it. It should seem, the Egyptians were not hearty, had strength enough, but no good will to help Zedekiah. Note, Those who deal treacherously with those who put confidence in them, will justly be dealt treacherously with by those they put a confidence in. Yet the Egyptians were not the only states Zedekiah stayed himself upon; he had hands of his own, to stand by him; but those hands, though we may suppose they were veteran troops, and the best soldiers his kingdom afforded, shall become fugitives, shall quit their posts, and make the best of their way, and shall fall by the sword of the enemy, and the remains of them shall be scattered, v. 21. This was fulfilled when the enemy broke up, and all the remnants of their host, Jer. ii. 7. The next verse begins, That I the Lord have spoken it. Note, Sooner or later, God's word will prove itself; and those who will not believe, shall find by experience the reality and weight of it.

22. Thus said the Lord God, I will also take of the highest branch of the high cedar, and will set it; I will crop off from the top of his young twigs a tender one, and will plant it upon a high mountain and eminent; 23. In the mountain of the height of Israel will I plant it; and it shall bring forth boughs, and bear fruit, and he a goodly cedar; and under it shall dwell all fowl of every wing;
in the shadow of the branches thereof shall they dwell. 24. And all the trees of the field shall know that I the Lord have brought down the high tree, have exalted the low tree, have dried up the green tree, and have made the dry tree to flourish: I the Lord have spoken, and have done it. 25. Thus saith the Lord God; O house of Israel, is this a small thing unto you, that ye are become after your kindred? 26. Therefore shall the Proverb be: As the eagle hath not made her nest, nor does it dwell among the high places; but she hath placed herself upon the earth among the young twigs, 

the churches of Judea were the most primitive churches. The unbelieving Jews did what they could to prevent its being planted there; but who can pluck up what God will plant? 4. From thence it spreads far and wide. The Jewish state, though it began very low in Zerbabiah's time, was set as a tender branch, which might easily be plucked up, yet took root, spread strangely, and after some time became very considerable; those of other nations, foul of every wing, put themselves under the protection of it. The Christian church was at first like a grain of mustard seed, but became like this tender branch here, a great tree; its beginning small, but its latter end increasing to great height. 5. It is thus that Nebuchadnezzar, which was the great eagle that had attempted the re-establishing of the house of David, in a dependence upon him, v. 5. But the attempt miscarried; his plantation withered, and was plucked up; "Well," says God, "the next shall be of my planting, I will also take of the highest branch of the high cedar, and I will substitute it." Note, As men have their designs, God also has his devices, and shall frustrate them. 6. This Nebuchadnezzar prided himself in setting up kingdoms at his pleasure, Dan. v. 19. But those kingdoms soon had an end, whereas the God of heaven sets up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, Dan. ii. 44. 2. The house of David is revived in a tender one; caught from the top of his young twigs; Zerubbabel was of that which was hopefully in the day of small things, (Zech. iv. 10.) yet before him great mountains were made plain. Our Lord Jesus was the highest Branch of the high cedar, the father of all from the root; for, soon after he appeared, the house of David was all cut off and extinguished, but the nearest of all to heaven, for his kingdom was not of this world. He was taken from the top of the young twigs, Isa. liv. 1, and from the Branch, a tender Plant, and a Root out of a dry ground, (Isa. lii. 2.) but a Branch of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified. 3. This branch is planted in a high mountain, (v. 22.) in the mountain of the height of Israel; (v. 23.) thither he brought Zerubbabel in triumph, there he raised up his son Jesus, sent him to gather the last of all the branches of David that were scattered upon the mountains, set him King upon his holy hill of Zion, sent forth the gospel from mount Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem; there, in the height of Israel, a nation which all its neighbours had an eye upon as conspicuous and illustrious, was the Christian church first planted; this day. 

CHAP. XVIII. Perhaps, in reading some of the chapters foregoing, we may have been tempted to think ourselves not much concerned in them; (though a Committee for our learning) but this chapter, at first view, appears highly and nearly to concern us all—very highly, very nearly; for without particular reference to Judah and Jerusalem, it says directly the rule of Jehovah; if the Lord have spoken, it is the decree, the declared decree, that Christ must be exalted, must be the Head-Stone of the corner, and I have done it, I will do it in due time, but it is as sure to be done as if it were done already; With men saying and doing are two things, but they are not so with God. What he has spoken we may be sure that he will do, and shall do with them; (though his word fall to the ground, for he is not a man, that he should lie, or the son of man, that he should repent either of his threatenings or of his promises. 

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well, shall thou not be accepted? But if, not sin, the punishment of sin, lies at the door. Here it is, I. The corrupt proverb used by the profane Jews, which gave occasion to the message here sent them, and made it necessary for the justifying of God in his dealings with them, v. 4. H. 14. 15. And therefore, as to this grave complaint of, he assures us, 1. That it shall be ill with a wicked man, though he had a good father, v. 10. 13. 2. That it shall be well with a good man, though he had a wicked father; in particular, as to this great complaint of, he assures us, 1. That it shall be ill with a wicked man, though he had a good father, v. 10. 13. 2. That it shall be well with a good man, though he had a wicked father, v. 15. 3. That it shall be well with penitents, though they began ever so ill, v. 21. 23. and again, v. 27. 28. 4. That it shall be ill with apostates, though it be well, v. 29. And the reason of all this is, (1.) To justify God, and clear the equity of all his proceedings, v. 25. 29. (2.) To engage and encourage us to repent of our sins, and turn to God, v. 30. 32. And these are things which belong to our everlasting peace. O that we may understand and regard them before they be hid from our eyes!

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

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

1. An evil proverb commonly used by the Jews in their captivity. We had one before, (ch. xii. 22.) and a reply to it; here we have another. That sets God's justice at defiance, The days are prolonged, and every vision fails. The threatenings are a jest. This charges him with injustice, as if the judgments executed were a wrong; "You use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, now that it is fled, to the judgment of God, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge," we are punished for the sins of our ancestors, which is as great an absurdity in the divine regimen, as if the children should have their teeth set on edge, or stubbed, by the fathers' eating sour grapes, whereas, in the order of natural causes, if men eat or drink any thing amiss, they only themselves shall suffer by it. Now, it may be owned that there was some occasion given for this proverb. God had often said that he would visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, especially the sin of idolatry, intending thereby to express the evils of sin, or of that sin, his detestation of it, and just indignation against it, and the heavy punishments he would bring upon idolaters, and that parents might be restrained by their aflection to their children, and that children might not be drawn to sin by their reverence for their parents. He had likewise often declared by his prophets, that in bringing the present ruin upon Judah and Jerusalem he had an eye to the sins of Manasseh and other preceding kings; for looking upon the nation as a body politic, and punishing them with national judgments for national sins, and admitting the maxim in our law, that a corporation never dies, reckoning with them now for the iniquities of former ages, was but like making a man, when he is old, to possess the iniquities of his youth. Job xiii. 26. And there is no unrighteousness with God in doing so. But, 2. They intended it as a reflection upon God himself, as being the author of their proceedings against them. Thus far that is right, which is implied in this proverbial saying. That they who are guilty of wilful sin, eat sour grapes, they do that which they will feel from, sooner or later. The grapes may look well enough in the temptation, but they will be bitter as bitterness itself in the reflection. They will set the sinner's teeth on edge; when conscience is awakened, and sets the sin in order before them, it will spoil the relish of their comforts as when the teeth are set on edge. But they suggest it as unreasonable that the children should smart for the father's folly, and feel the pain of that which they never tasted the pleasure of, and that God was unrighteous in thus taking vengeance, and could not justify it. See how wicked the reflection is, how daring the impudence; yet see how witty it is, and how sly the comparison. Many that are impious in their jeers, are ingenuous in their jests; and thus the malice of hell against God and religion is insinuated and propagated. It is here put into a proverb, and that proverb used, commonly used, they had it up ever and anon. And though it be but a slanderous saying, yet it sheltered themselves secretly from the imputation of downright blasphemy. Now by this it appears that they were unhumbled under the rod, for, instead of condemning themselves and justifying God, they condemned him and justified themselves; but wo to him that thus strives with his Maker.

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

1. That the use of the proverb should be taken away. This is said, it is sworn; (v. 3.) Ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb; or, as it may be read, Ye shall not have the use of this parable. The taking away of this parable is made the matter of a promise, Jer. xxxi. 29. Here it is made the matter of a threatening; there it intimates that God will judge them in ways of mercy; here it intimates that God will judge them in ways of judgment. He will so punish them for this impudent saying, that they shall not dare to use it any more; as in another case Jer. xxiii. 34,
36. God will find out effectual ways to silence those cavillers. Or, God will so manifest both to themselves and others that they have wickedness of their own enough to bring all these desolating judgments upon them, that they shall no longer for shame lay it upon the sins of their fathers that they were thus dealt with; 'Your own consciences shall tell you, yea, or rather, the Lord your God shall tell you, "but you yourselves have eaten the same sour grapes that your fathers ate before you, or else your teeth had not been set on edge."

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

[2.] He asserts and maintains his own absolute and incontestable sovereignty; Behold, all souls are mine, v. 4. Here God claims a property in all the souls of the children of men, one as well as another; First, Souls are his. He that is the Maker of all things, is in a particular manner the Father of spirits, for his image is stamped on the souls of men; it was so in their creation. It is so in their reprobation, for he forms the spirit of sin within him, and is therefore called the God of the spirits of all flesh, of embodied spirits. Secondly, All souls are his, all created by him and for him, and accountable to him. As the soul of the father, so the soul of the son, is mine. Our earthly parents are only the fathers of our flesh, our souls are not theirs, God challenges them. Now from hence it follows, for the clearing of this matter,

1. That God may certainly do what he pleases both with fathers and children, and none may say unto him, What dost thou? He that gave us our being does us no wrong if he takes it away again, much less when he only takes away some of the supports and comforts of it; it is as absurd to quarrel with him as for the thing formed to say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? That God as certainly hear a good will both to father and son, and will put no hardship upon either. We are sure that God hates nothing that he has made, and therefore (speaking of the adult who are capable of acting for themselves) he has such a kindness for all souls, that none die but through their own default. All souls are his, and therefore he is not partial to anyone of them. Let us subscribe to his interest in us, and dominion over us. He says, All souls are mine; let us answer, "Lord, my soul is thine, I devote it to thee to be employed for thee, and made happy in thee." It is with good reason that God says, "My son, give me thy heart, for it is my own;" to which we must yield; "Father, take my heart, it is thy own."

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

First, That the least virtue, or the least consistency in sin shall certainly die, his iniquity shall be his ruin. The soul that sins, it shall die, shall die as a soul can die, shall be excluded from the favour of God, which is the life and bliss of the soul, and shall lie for ever under his wrath, which is its death and misery. Sin is the act of the soul, the body is but the instrument of unrighteousness, it is called the soul of the body, Mic. vi. 7. And therefore the punishment of sin is the tribulation and anguish of the soul, Rom. ii. 9. Secondly, The righteous man that perseveres in his righteousness, shall certainly live. If a man be just, have a good principle, a good spirit and disposition, and, as an evidence of that, do judgment and justice, (v. 5.) he shall surely live, saith the Lord God, v. 9. He that makes conscience of conforming himself in every thing to the will of God, that makes it his business to serve God, and his aim to glorify God, he shall without fail be happy here, and for ever in the love and favour of God; and wherein he comes short of his duty, it shall be forgiven him, through a Mediator.

Now here is part of the character of this just man. He is constantly to keep himself clean from the pollutions of sin, and at a distance from all the appearances of evil.

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

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

(3.) From sins against the eighth commandment. He is a just man, who has not, by fraud and under colour of law and right, oppressed, and who has not with force and arms spoiled any by violence; not spoiled them of their goods or estates, much less of their liberties and lives, v. 7. Oppression and violence were the sins of the old world, that brought the deluge, and are sins of which still God is, and will be, the Avenger. Nay, he is one that
10. If he beget a son that is a robber, a shedder of blood, and that doeth the like to any one of these things, 11. And that doeth not any of those duties, but even hath eaten upon the mountains, and defiled his neigh-
bour's wife. 12. Hath oppressed the poor and needy, hath spoiled by violence, and hath haled up his eyes to the idols, hath committed abomina-
tion. 13. Hath given forth upon usury, and hath taken increase: shall he then live? 14. He shall not live: he hath done all those abominations; he shall surely die, his blood shall be upon him. 14. Now, lo, if he beget a son that seeth all his father's sins which he hath done, and considereth, and doeth not such like, 15. That hath not eaten upon the mountains, neither hath lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, hath not defiled his neighbour's wife, 16. Neither hath oppressed any, hath not withholden the pledge, neither hath spoiled by violence, but hath given his bread to the hungry, and hath covered the naked with a garment, 17. That hath taken off his hand from the poor, that hath not received usury nor increase, hath executed my judgments, hath walked in my statutes; he shall not die for the iniquity of his father, he shall surely live. 18. As for his father, because he cruelly oppressed, spoiled his brother by violence, and did that which is not good among his people, lo, even he shall die in his iniquity. 19. Yet say ye, Why? doth not the son bear the iniquity of the father? When the son hath done that which is lawful and right, and hath kept all my statutes, and hath done them, he shall surely live. 20. The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.

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

I. He applies it largely, and particularly, both ways. As it was in the royal line of the kings of Judah, so it often happens in private families, that godly parents have wicked children, and wicked parents have godly children. Now here he shows, 1. That a wicked man shall certainly perish in his iniquity, though he was the son of a pious father. If that righteous man before described beget a son whose character is the reverse of his father's, his condition will certainly be so too. (1.) It is supposed, as no uncommon case, but a very melancholy one, that the child of a very godly father, notwithstanding all the instructions given him, the good education he has had, and the needful rebukes that have been given him, and the restraints he has been laid under, after all the pains taken with him, and prayers put up for him, may yet prove notoriously wicked and vile, the grief of his father, the shame
of his family, and the curse and plague of his gene-
ration. He is here supposed to allow himself in all the
enormities which his father did, and he is
carefully avoided, and to shake off all these gross
duties which his father made conscience of and took
satisfaction in; he uncles all that his father did, and
goes counter to his example in every thing. He
is here described to be a highwayman, a robber, and
a shedder of blood; an idolater, he has eaten upon
the mountains, (v. 11.) and has lifted up his eyes to
the heaven, (v. 12.) and his father never knew, and has
come at length not only to feast with the idolatry,
but to sacrifice with them, which is here called
committing abomination, for the way of sin is
downhill. He is a adulterer, he has defiled his neighbour's
wife; an oppressor even of the poor and needy, he
robs the spital, and squeezes those who, he knows,
cannot right themselves, and takes a pride and
pleasure in trapping upon the weak, and
improperizing those that are poor already. He
rakes away from those to whom he should give. He
has spoiled by violence and open force, he has given
forth upon usury, and so spoiled by contract; and
has not restored the pledge, but unjustly detained it,
even when the debt was paid. Let those good
parents that have wicked children, not look upon their
case as singular; it is a case put here; and by it we see
the power grace original sin and the necessity of special
grace. (2.) We are here assured that this
wicked man shall perish for ever in his iniquity,
notwithstanding his being the son of a good father.
He may perhaps prosper awhile in the world, for
the sake of the pite of his ancestors, but, having
committed all these abominations, and never re-
pented of them, he shall not live, he shall not be
happy in the favour of God; though he may escape
the sword of men, he shall not escape the curse of
God, he shall surely die, he shall be for ever miser-
able; his blood shall be upon him, he may thank
himself, he is his own destroyer; and his relation to
a good father will be so far from standing him in
stead, that it will aggravate his sin and his condem-
nation. It made his sin the more heinous, nay, it
made him really the more vile and profligate, and,
considering this I think, may make his misery hereafter the more intolerable.

2. That a righteous man shall be certainly hap-
py, though he is the son of a wicked father.
Though the father did eat the sour grapes, if the
children do not meddle with them, they shall face
never the worse for that. Here
(1.) It is supposed, and, blessed be God, it is some-
time the case, that a son of an ungodly father may be godly; that, observing how fatal his
father's errors were, he may be so wise as to take
warning, and not tread in his father's steps, v. 14.
Ordinarily, children partake of the parents' temper,
and are drawn in to imitate their example; but
here the son, instead of seeing his father's sins, and
what he did, does the like, sees them, and dreams
during the like. If a wicked father be greatly
wronged, but God sometimes does take a branch
from a wild olive, and grafts it into one good. Wicked
Ahaz begets a good Hezekiah, who sees
all his father's sins which he has done, and though
he will not, like Ham, proclaim his father's shame,
or make the worst of it, yet he lothes it, and bruises
at it, and thinks the worse of sin because it was the
reproof and ruin of his own father. He considers,
and does not such like; he considers how ill it
be came his father to do such things, what offence it
was to God and all good men, what a wound and
dishonour he get by it, and therefore he generally
bears it, as he brought into his family, and therefore he does not
such like. Note, If we did but duly consider the
ways of wicked men, we should all dread being as-
sociates with them, and followers of them. The
particulars are here again enumerated almost in the
same words with that character given of the just
man, (v. 6, &c.) to show how strangely weak in the
same spirit, and easy to be led astray. Thus
here, when he took care to avoid his father's sins,
took care to imitate his grandfather's virtues; and if
we look back, we shall find some examples for our imi-
tation, as well as others for our admonition. This
just man cannot only say, as the Parthian, Lam.
no adulterer, no extortioner, no oppressor, no
idolater; but he has given his bread to the hungry,
covered the naked; he has taken off his hand
from the poor; where he found his father had put
hardships upon poor servants, tenants, neighbours,
he eased their burden; he did not say, "What my
father has done I will abide by, and if it was a
fault it was his, and not mine," as Rechobam, who
continued the taxes his father had imposed: no,
take his hand off from the poor, and restores
them to their possessions.
(2.) We are assured that the graceless father
alone shall die in his iniquity, but his gracious son
shall live never the worse for it. As for his father,
(v. 18.) because he was a cruel oppressor, and did
hurt, nor because, though he had wealth and
power, he did not do it good among his people;
but, even he, great as he is, shall die in his iniquity,
and be undone for ever; but he that kept his integ-
rety shall surely live, shall be easy and happy, and
shall not die for the iniquity of his father. Per-
haps his father's wickedness has lessened his estate,
and weakened his interest, but it shall be no preju-
dice at all to his acceptance with God and his eter-
nal welfare.

II. He appeals to themselves then, whether they
did not wrong God with their provorb. Thus plain
the case is, and yet we say, Does not the son bear
the iniquity of the father? No, he does not; he shall
not if he will himself do that which is lawful and
right, v. 19. But this people that bare the iniquity
of their fathers, had not done that which is lawful
and right, and therefore could not plead any grace
on their side, and had no reason to complain of God's
proceedings against them as at all unjust, though
they had reason to complain of the bad example
their fathers had left them as very unkind. Our
fathers have sinned, and are not, and we have
borne their iniquity, Lam. v. 7. It is true that
there is a curse entailed upon wicked families, but
not in such a true and literal sense as some would
make it, by way of instance and reformation; let the impenitent and un-
reformed therefore thank themselves if they fall
under it. The settled rule of judgment is therefore
repeated; (v. 26.) The soul that sinneth, it shall
die, and not another for it. What direction God
has given to earthly judges, (Deut. xxiv. 16.) he
will himself pursue; The son shall not die, not die
eternally, for the iniquity of his father, nor be
condemned in the steps of it, nor the father for the iniquity
of the son, if he endeavoured to do his duty for the
preventing of it. In the day of the revelation of the
righteous judgment of God, which is now clouded
and eclipsed, the righteousness of the righteous
shall appear before all the world, to be upon him to
his everlasting comfort and honour, upon him as a
robe, upon him as a crown; and the wickedness of
21. But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. 22. All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him: in his righteousness that he hath done, shall he live. 23. Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God; and not that he should return from his ways, and live! 24. But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass, that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die. 25. Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal. 'Hear ye now, O house of Israel, is not my way equal? are not your ways unequal? 26. When a righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and dieth in them; for his iniquity that he hath done, shall he die. 27. Again, when the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness, that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive. 28. Because he considereth, and turneth away from all his transgressions that he hath committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die. 29. Yet saith the house of Israel, The way of the Lord is not equal. O house of Israel, are not my ways equal? are not your ways unequal?  

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

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

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

Observe, (1.) What is required to denominate a man a true convert; how he must be qualified, that he may be entitled to this act of indemnity. [1.] The first step toward conversion is consideration; (v. 28.) Because he considers, and turns. The reason why sinners go on in their evil ways is, because they do not consider what will be in the end thereof; but if the prophet once came to himself, if he looked down, and consider a little how bad his state is, and how easily it may be changed, he will see return to his father. (Luke xv. 17.) and the adulteress to her first husband, when she considers that it was better with her than now, Hos. ii. 7. [2.] This consideration must produce an aversion to sin. When he considers he must turn away from his wickedness, that changes the heart; he must think of his sins, that changes the life; that changes a change in the heart; he must break off from all his evil courses, and, wherein he has done iniquity, must resolve to do so no more, and this from a principle of hatred to sin. What have I to do any more with idols? [3.] This aversion to sin must be universal; he must turn from all his sins and all his transgressions, without a reserve for any Deliah, any house of Rimmon. We cannot righteously turn from sin, unless we truly hate it, and we do not truly hate sin, as sin, if we do not hate all sin. [4.] This must be accompanied with a conversion to God and duty: he must keep all God's statues, (for the obedience, if it be sincere, will be universal,) and must do that which is lawful and right, which agrees with the word and will of God, which he must truly do, in his soul, and not the wills of the flesh, and the way of the world. (2.) What is promised to those that do thus turn from sin to God. [1.] They shall save their souls alive, v. 27. They shall surely live, they shall not die, (v. 21.) and again, (v. 28.) whereas it was said, The soul that sineth shall die, yet let not those who have sinned despair but the threatened death shall be prevented, if they will but turn and live in time. When David penitently acknowledges, I have sinned, he is immediately assured of his pardon; "The Lord hath taken away the sin, thou shalt not die, (2 Sam. xii. 13.) then shalt not die eternally." He shall surely live; he shall be restored to the favor of God, which is the life of the soul, and shall not lie under his wrath, which is as messengers of death to the soul. [2.] The sins they have repented of, and forsaken, shall not rise up in judgment against them, nor shall they be so much as upbraided with them; All his transgressions that he hath committed, though numerous, though heinous, though very provoking to God, and redounding much to his dishonor, yet they are here mentioned unto him, (v. 22.) not mentioned against him; nor only they that must be imputed to him to ruin him, but in the great day they shall not be remembered against him to grieve or shame him; they shall be covered, shall be sought for, and not found. This speaks the fulness of pardoning mercy; when sin is forgiven, it is buried over, it is remembered no more. [3.] In their righteousness they shall not be affected for their righteousness, as that were the proper reward of their innocence and bliss, and an atonement for their sins, but in their righteousness, which qualifies them for all the blessings purchased by the Mediator, and is itself one of those blessings. (3.) What encouragement a repenting, returning sinner has to hope for pardon and life according to the promises of the covenant, his comfort that his obedience for the future can never be a vain or useless compensation for his former disobedience; but he has this to support himself with, that God's nature, property, and delight, is to have mercy and to forgive, for he has said, (v. 23.) "Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? No, by no means, you never had any cause given you to think so." It is true, God has determined to punish sinners, his justice calls for it, and, pursuant to that,
impecent sinners will lie for ever under a wrath and curse; that is the will of his decree, his consequent will, but it is not his antecedent will, the will of his delight; though the righteousness of his government requires that sinners die, yet the goodness of his nature objects against it; How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? It is spoken here comparatively; he has not pleasure in the sinners of his people; he would rather they should turn from their ways and live, and be spared, and when his mercy is glorified in their salvation, than when his justice is glorified in their damnation.

2. A fair warning given to righteous people, not to turn from their righteousness, v. 24-26. Here is, (1.) The character of an apostate, that turns away from his righteousness: he never was in sincerity a righteous man, (as appears by that of the apostate, (i John ii. 19.) If they had been what they would, no doubt, have continued with us,) but he passed for a righteous man, had the denomination and all the external marks of a righteous man, he thought himself one, and others thought him one, but he throws off his profession, leaves his first love, disowns and forsakes the truth and ways of God, and so turns away from his righteousness as one sick and hagard, and what a fit person for a secret aversion to; and, having turned away from his righteousness, he commits iniquity, grows loose, and profane, and sensual, intemperate, unjust, and, in short, does according to all the abominations that the wicked man does; for when the unclean spirit recovers his possession of the heart, he brings with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and do worse, Luke xi. 26. (2.) The doom of an apostate; Shall he live because he was once a righteous man? No, Factum non dicitur good non perseverat—that which does not abide, is not said to be done. In his trespass, (v. 24.) and for his iniquity, (that is the meritorious cause of his ruin,) for the iniquity that he has done, he shall die, shall die eternally, v. 26. The buckler in heart shall be filled with his own ways. But will not his former professions and performances stand him in some stead—will they not avail at least to mitigate his punishment? No, All his righteousness that he has done, though ever so much applauded by men, shall not be mentioned so as to be either a credit or a comfort to him; the righteousness of an apostate is forgotten, as the wickedness of a Lazarus; the dead are indifferent, and the living disapprove, Luke xxiv. 5. Nazarite and Nazarites were polluted he lost all his foregiving of his separation, (Numb. vi. 12.) so that those who have begun in the spirit and end in the flesh, may reckon all their past services and sufferings in vain; (Gal. iii. 3, 4.) unless we persever we lose what we have gained, 2 John viii.

II. An appeal to the consciences of every part of the house of Israel, though very solemn, incurring God's equity in all these proceedings: for he will be justified, as well as sinners judged, out of their own mouths. 1. The charge they drew up against God is blasphemous, v. 25, 29. The house of Israel has the impudence to say, The way of the Lord is not equal; than which nothing could be more absurd as well as impious. He that formed the eye, shall he not judge your unrighteousness? and the ear, your iniquity; and the heart, your righteousness? Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? No doubt, he shall; he cannot do otherwise. 2. God's reasonings with them are very gracious and condescending, for even these blasphemers God would rather have convinced and saved than condemned. One would have expected that God should have demonstrated infallibly his righteousness by making those that impeached it eternal monuments of it. Must these be suffered to draw another breath, that have once breathed out such wickedness as this? Shall that tongue ever speak again anywhere but in hell, that has once said, The ways of the Lord are not equal? Yes, because this is the day of God's patience, he vouchsafes to give them time, and he requires them to own it, for it is so plain, that they cannot deny, (1.) The equity of his ways; Are not my ways equal? No doubt they are. He never lays upon man more than is right. In the present punishments of sinners and the afflictions of his own people, you, and in the eternal damnation of the apostate, they are justified in themselves, (2.) The iniquity of their ways; Are not your ways unequal? It is plain that they are, and the troubles you are in have brought upon your own heads. God does you no wrong, but you have wronged yourselves. The foolishness of man perverts his way, makes that unequal, and then his heart frets and pleads with the Lord, as if his ways were unequal, Prov. xix. 3. In all our disputes with God, in all his controversies with us, it will be found that his ways are equal, but ours are unequal, that he is in the right, and we are in the wrong.

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

We have here the conclusion and application of this whole matter. After a fair trial at the bar of right reason, the verdict is brought in on God's side, it appears that his ways are equal; judgment therefore is next to be given; and one would think it should be a judgment of condemnation, nothing short of God, ye cursed, into everlasting fire; but behold a miracle of mercy; the day of grace and divine patience is yet lengthened out; and therefore, though God will at last judge every one according to his ways, yet he will not cast them off from being graciously and forever with a call to repentance, and a promise of pardoning upon repentance.

1. Here are four necessary duties that we are called to; all amounting to the same. (1.) We must repent; we must change our mind, and change our ways; we must be sorry for what we have done amiss, and ashamed of it, and go as far as we can toward the undoing of it again. (2.) We must turn ourselves from all our transgressions, (v. 30.) and again, v. 32. Turn yourselves, face about; turn from sin, may, turn against it as the enemy you brate, turn to God as the Friend you love. (3.) We must cast away from us all our transgressions, we must abandon and forsake them with a resolution never to return to them again; give sin a bill of divorce, break all the leagues we have made with it, throw it overboard, as the mariners did Jonah, for it has raised the storm; cast it out of the soul, and crucify it, as a malefactor. (4.) We must make us a new heart, and a new spirit. This was the matter of a promise, ch. xi. 19. here it is the matter of a precept; we must do our endeavour, and then God will not be wanting to us to give us his grace.
they put him in ward in chains, and brought him to the king of Babylon: they brought him into holds, that his voice should no more be heard upon the mountains of Israel.

Here are,

1. Orders given to the prophet to bewail the fall of the royal family, which had long made so great a figure by virtue of a covenant of royalty made with David and his seed, so that the eclipsing and extinguishing of it are justly lamented by all who know what value to put upon the covenant of our God:

Turn yourselves and live, ye. He that says to us, Repent, thereby says to us, Live, yea, he says to us, Live, so that life and death are here set before us.

CHAP. XIX.

The scope of this chapter is much the same with that of the 17th, to foretell and lament the ruin of the house of David, the royal family of Judah, in the calamitous age of that maniac of a family, Jehosiah, Jeconiah, and Zedekiah, in whom that illustrious line of kings was cut off, which the prophet is here ordered to lament, v. 1. And he does it by similitudes.

1. The kingdom of Judah and house of David are here compared to a lioness, and those princes to lions that were fierce and ravenous, but were hunted down, and taken in nets, v. 2—9. 2. That kingdom and that house are here compared to a vine, and these princes to branches, which had been strong and flourishing, but were now broken off and burnt, v. 10—14. This ruin of that monarchy was now in the doing, and this lamentation of it was intended to affect the people with it, that they might not flatter themselves with vain hopes of the lengthening out of their tranquility.

Moreover, take thine up a lamentation for the princes of Israel.

2. And say, What is thy mother? A lioness: she lay down among lions, she nourished her whelps among young lions. 3. And she brought up one of her whelps: it became a young lion, and it learned to catch the prey; it devoured men.

4. The nations also heard of him; he was taken in their pit, and they brought him with chains into the land of Egypt. 5. Now, when she saw that she had waited, and her hope was lost, then she took another of her whelps, and made him a young lion. 6. And he went up and down among the lions, he became a young lion, and learned to catch the prey, and devoured men.

7. And he knew their desolate palaces, and he laid waste their cities; and the land was desolate, and the fulness thereof, by the noise of his roaring. 8. Then the nations set against him on every side from the provinces, and spread their net over him: he was taken in their pit. 9. And
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v. 3.) he was made king, and thought he was made so that he might do what he pleased, and gratify his own ambition, courtesy, and revenge, as he had a mind; and so he was soon master of all the arts of tyranny, he learned to catch the prey, and devoured men; when he got power in his hand, all that had before in any thing disobliger were not to feel his resentment, and become a sacrifice to his rage. But what was the end of all this? The end of it, as long as he lived, was the nations heard of him, (v. 4.) heard how furiously he drove, at his first coming to the crown, how he trampled on all that is just and sacred, and violated all his engagements, so that they looked upon him as a dangerous neighbour, and prosecuted him accordingly, as a multitude of shepherds is called forth against a lion roaring on the prey, Isa. xxxxi. 4. And he was taken, as a beast of prey, in the jaws of his own subjects, just as Saul had not stood up in defence of their own liberties, but God raised up a foreign power that soon put an end to his tyranny, and brought him in chains to the land of Egypt. Thirteenth Jehovah was carried captive, and never heard of more.

(2.) The like sin and fall of his successor Jehoiakim. The kingdom of Judah for some time expiated the sins of his father. Ezek. xxvi. 3. Egypt, though length despaired of it, and then took another of the lion's whelps, and made him a young lion, v. 5. And he, instead of taking warning by his brother's fate, to use his power with equity and moderation, and to seek the good of his people, trod in his brother's steps; he went up and down among the lions, v. 6. He consulted and conversed with those that were fierce and furious himself, and took their measures from them, as Rechabom took the advice of the rash and hot-headed young men; and he soon learned to catch the prey, and devoured men, (v. 6.) he seized his subjects' estates, fined and imprisoned them, filled his treasury by rapine and injustice, sequestrations and confiscations, fines and forfeitures, and swallowed up all that stood in his way; he had got the art of discovering what effects men had that lay concealed, and where the treasures were, which they had hoarded up; he knew their desolate places, (v. 7.) where they hid their money, and sometimes hid themselves; he knew where to find both out; and by his oppression he laid waste their cities, depopulated them by forcing the inhabitants to remove their families to the desert of the wilderness, and the country villages were deserted; and though there was great plenty, and a fulness of all good things, yet people quitted it all for fear of the voice of his roaring. He took a pride in making all his subjects afraid of him, as the lion makes all the beasts of the field to tremble, (Amos iii. 8.) and by his terrible roaring so astonished them, that they fell down for fear, and, living not to make their escape, became an easy prey to him, as they say the lions do. He hectored, and threatened, and talked big, and bullied people out of what they had. Thus he thought to have established his own power, but it had a contrary effect, it did but hasten his own ruin; (v. 8.) The nations set against him on every side, to restrain and reduce his exorbitant power to some place of safety. He made his subjects cast up for their common safety; and they spread their net over him, formed designs against him. God brought against Jehoiakim bands of the Syrians, Moabites, and Ammonites, with the Chaldees, (2 Kings xxiv. 2.) and he was taken in their pit. Nebuchadnezzar bound him in fetters to carry him to Babylon, 2 Chron. xxxix. 6. They put this lion within grated bars, because he would have devoured them all. They then brought him to Babylon, v. 9. What became of him we know not, but his voice was no where heard roaring upon the mountains of Israel. There was an end of his tyranny; he was buried with the burial of an ass (Jer. xxii. 19.) though he had been as a lion, the terror of the mighty in the land of the living. Note. The righteousness of God is to be acknowledged when those who have terrified and enslaved others are themselves terrified and enslaved; when those who by the abuse of their power to destruction which was given them for education, make themselves as wild beasts, as roaring lions and raging bears, (Isa. xxxiv. 15.) are treated as such; when those who, like Ishmael, have their hands against every man, come at last to have every man's hand against them. It was long since observed that bloody tyrants seldom die in peace, but have blood given them to drink, for they are worthy.

Ad genemone Ceres sine cavo et singuine panni
Desecranti reges et sanit morte tyrannos-
How few of all the beauteous men, that reign,
Descent in peace to Pluto's dark dominion! Jer.

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

Jerusalem, the mother-city, is here represented by another similitude; she is a vine, and the princes are her branches. This comparison we had before, ch. xvi. 1. Jerusalem is as a vine; the Jewish nation is so; like a vine in thy blood, (v. 10.) the blood royal; like a vine in blood, which contributes very much to the flourishing and fruitfulness of vines, as if the blood which had been shed had been designed for the fattening and improving of the soil; in such plenty was it shed; and for a time it seemed to have that effect, for she was fruitful and full of branches, by reason of the waters, the many waters near which she was planted. 2. And these waters, which were great and broad, and a vine set in blood may be full of branches. Jerusalem was full of able magistrates, men of sense, men of learning and experience, that were strong rods, branches of this vine, of uncommon bulk and strength; or, poles for the support of this vine; for such magistrates are. The boughs of this vine were grown to such maturity, that they were fit for a vine to be made up, and on them we have that bear rule, v. 11. And they are strong rods only that are fit for sceptres, men of strong judgments and strong resolutions, that are fit for magistrates. When the royal family of Judah was numerous, and the courts of justice filled with men of sense and probity, then Jerusalem's stature was exalted among the thick branches; when the government is in the families and able hands, a nation is thereby made considerable. Then she was not taken for a weak and lowly vine, but she appeared in her height, a distinguished city, with the multitude of her
branches; Tammam lenta solent inter viburna cupressis—Midst humble withith the cyress spoars, In thy quietness; so some read that, v. 10. which we translate, in thy blood, thou wast such a vine as this. When Zedekiah was quiet and easy under the king of Babylon's yoke, his kingdom flourished thus. See how slow God is to anger, how he defers his judgments, and waits to be gracious.

This verse destroys Nebuchadnezzar, being highly provoked by Zedekiah's treachery, plucked it up in fury, (v. 12.) ruined the city and kingdom, and cut off all the branches of the royal family that fell in his way. The vine was cut off close to the ground, though not plucked up by the roots; the east-wind dried up the fruit that was blasted, the young people fell by the sword, or were carried into captivity. The aspect of it had nothing that was pleasing, the prospect nothing that was promising. Her strong rods were broken and withered, her great men were cut off, judges and magistrates depose; the vine itself is planted in the wilderness, v. 13. Babylon was as a wilderness to these of the people that were carried captives thither; the land of Judah was as a wilderness; Jerusalem, the vine of Israel, was ravaged and laid waste by the Chaldean army; a fruitful land turned into barrenness. It is burst with fire, (Ps. lxxx. 16.) and that fire is gone out of a rod of her branches; (v. 14.) the king himself, by rebelling against the king of Babylon, has given occasion to all this mischief; she may thank herself for the fire that consumes her; she has her will, as though she were, in her pride and power, come made herself as tender to the sparks of God's wrath, so that her own branches serve as fuel for her own consumption; in them the fire is kindled, which devoured the fruit, the sins of the elder being the judgments which destroy the younger; her fruit is burned with her own branches, so that she has no strong rod to be a sceptre to rule; none to be found now that are fit for the government, or dare take this ruin under their hand, as the complaint is; (Isa. iii. 6, 7.) none of the house of David left, that have a right to rule, no wise men, or men of sense, that are able to rule. It goes ill with any state, and is like to go worse, when it is thus deprived of the blessings of government, and has no strong rods for scepters. 'Wo unto thee, O land, when the king was taken for it is no more; how have the strong rods, not a strong rod. Those strong rods, we have reason to fear, had been instruments of oppression, assistant to the king in catching the prey, and devouring men, and now they are destroyed with him. Tyranny is the inlet to anarchy; and when the rod of government is turned into the serpent of oppression, it is just with God to say, "There shall be no strong rod to be a sceptre to rule; but let men be as are the fishes of the sea, where the greater devour the lesser." Note, This is a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation. The prophet was bidden, (v. 1.) to take up a lamentation; and having done so, he leaves it to be made use of by others. "It is a lamentation to us of this age, and the desolations continuing long, it shall be for a lamentation to those that shall come after us without the child mourn will the destruction made of Judah and Jerusalem by the present judgments. They were a great while in coming, the bow was long in the drawing; but now that they are come, they will continue, and the sad effects of them will be entailed upon posterity." Note, Those who fill up the measure of their fathers' sins, are laying up in store for their children's sorrows, and furnishing them with matter for lamentation; and nothing is more than the overthrowment of government.

CHAP. XX.

In this chapter, I. The prophet is consulted by some of the elders of Israel, v. 1. 11. He is instructed by God what answer to give them. He must, 1. Signify God's displeasure against them, v. 2, 3. And, 2. He must show them what just cause he had for that displeasure; by giving them a history of God's grateful dealings with their fathers, and their treacherous dealings with God, (1.) In Egypt, v. 5—9. (2.) In the wilderness, v. 10—26. (3.) In Canaan, v. 27—32. (4.) He must denote the judgments of God against them, v. 33, 36. (5.) He must show them like a mercy God had in store for them, when he would bring a remnant of them to repentance, re-establish them in their own land, and set up his sanctuary among them again, v. 37, 44. (6.) Here is another word dropped toward Jerusalem, which is explained and enlarged upon in the next chapter, v. 45, 49.

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

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

2. The manner of this inquiry, (1.) They must be made to know that God is angry with them; he takes it as an affront that they are come to inquire of him, when they are resolved to go on still in their trespasses; As I live, saith the Lord God, I will not be inquired of by you, v. 3. Their shows of devotion shall be neither acceptable to God nor advantageous to themselves. God will not take notice of their inquiries, nor give them any satisfactory answers. Note, A hypocritical attendance on God and his ordinances is so far from being pleasing to him, that it is provoking.
(2.) They must be made to know that God is justly angry with them; (v. 4.) "Wilt thou judge them, son of man, with the judgment of the nations? Thereafter, surely will thou not plead for them, as an intercessor with God; but surely thou wilt pass sentence on them as a judge for God. See, I have set thee over the nation; wilt thou not declare to them the judgments of the Lord? Cause them therefore to know the abominations of their fathers."

So the orders run now, as before, ch. xvi. 2. He must cause them to know their own abominations. Though their own abominations were sufficient to justify God in the severest of his proceedings against them, yet it would be of use for them to know the abominations of their fathers; that they might see what a righteous thing it was with God now at last to cut them off from being a people, who from the first were such a provoking people.

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

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

1. The gracious purposes of God's law concerning Israel in Egypt, where they were bond-slaves to Pharaoh. Be it spoken, be it written, to the immortal honour of free grace, that then and there, (v. 8.) They rebelled against God; not only refused to comply with his particular precepts, but shook off their allegiance, and in effect told him that they would be at liberty to worship what god they pleased. And even then when God came down to deliver them, and sent Moses for that purpose, yet they would not forsake the idols of Egypt; which perhaps more than all was the great effectual cause of their total destruction at the second coming of God of Egypt, (Numb. xii. 2;) for among other things the Egyptians worshipped an onion. It was strange that all the plagues of Egypt would not prevail to cure them of their affection to the idols of Egypt. For this, God said he would pour out his fury upon them, even while they were yet in the midst of the land of Egypt. Justly might he have said, "Let them die with the Egyptians." This magnifies the riches of God's goodness, that he was pleased to
work so great a salvation for them, even then when he saw them ripe for ruin. Well might Moses tell them, It is not for your righteousness,

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

10. Wherefore I caused them to go forth out of the land of Egypt, and brought them into the wilderness: 11. And I gave them my statutes, and shewed them my judgments, which if a man do, he shall even live in them. 12. Moreover also, I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them. 13. But the house of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness: they walked not in my statutes, and they despised my judgments, which if a man do, he shall even live in them; and my sabbaths they greatly polluted: then I said, I would pour out my fury upon them in the wilderness, to consume them. 14. But I wrought for my name's sake, that it should not be polluted before the heathen, in whose sight I brought you out. 15. Yet also I lifted up my hand unto them in the wilderness, that I would not bring them into the land which I had given them, flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands; 16. Because they despised my judgments, and walked not in my statutes, but polluted my sabbaths: for their heart went after their idols. 17. Nevertheless mine eye spared them from destroying them, neither did I make an end of them in the wilderness. 18. But I said unto their children in the wilderness, Walk ye not in the statutes of your fathers, neither observe their judgments, nor defile yourselves with their idols. 19. I am the Lord your God; walk in my statutes, and keep my judgments, and do them; 20. And hallow my sabbaths: and they shall be a sign between me and you, that ye may know that I am the Lord your God. 21. Notwithstanding the children rebelled against me: they walked not in my statutes, neither kept my judgments to do them, which if a man do, he shall even live in them; they polluted my sabbaths: then I said, I would pour out my fury upon them, to accomplish mine anger against them in the wilderness. 22. Nevertheless I withdrew my hand, and wrought for my name's sake, that it should not be polluted in the sight of the heathen, in whose sight I brought them forth. 23. I lifted up my hand unto them also in the wilderness, that I would scatter them among the heathen, and disperse them through the countries; 24. Because they had not executed my judgments, but had despised my statutes, and had polluted my sabbaths, and their eyes were after their fathers' idols. 25. Wherefore I gave them also statutes that were not good, and judgments whereby they should not live: 26. And I polluted them in their own gifts, in that they caused to pass through the fire all that opened the womb, that I might make them desolate, to the end that they might know that I am the Lord.

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

1. The great things God did for them, which he puts them in mind of, not as grudging them his favours, but to show how ungrateful they had been. And we say, If you call a man ungrateful, you can call him no worse. It was a great favour, (1.) That God brought them forth out of Egypt; (v. 11.) than which there can be no better. Nor could they walk in the wilderness, and not into Canaan immediately. It is better to be at liberty in a wilderness than bondslaves in a land of plenty; to enjoy God and ourselves in solitude, than to lose both in a crowd: yet there were many of them who had such base, servile spirits as not to understand this, but, when they met with the difficulties of a desert, wished themselves in Egypt again. (2.) That he gave them the law upon Mount Sinai; (v. 11.) not only (a) to bind them concerning good and evil, but by his authority to bound them from the evil and to the good. He gave them his statutes, and a valuable gift it was. Moses commanded them a law that was the inheritance of the congregation of Israel, Deut. xxxii. 4. God made them to know his judgments; not only enacted laws against them, but explained them, and taught the equity of these laws; with what judgment they were formed. The laws he gave them they were encouraged to observe and obey; for if a man do them, he shall even live in them; in keeping of God's commandments there is abundance of comfort, and a great reward. Christ says, If thou wilt enter into life, and enjoy it, keep the commandments. Though they who are the most strict in their obedience, and thus far unprofitable servants, that they do no more than is their duty to do, yet it is thus richly recom-
EZEKIEL, XX.

The Chaldees says, 

... This do, and thou shalt live. The Chaldees says, 

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

2. Their disobedient, unprofitable conduct toward God, for which he might justly have thrown them out of covenant as soon as he had taken them into covenant; (v. 13.) They rebelled, in the wilderness. The Chaldees says, 

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

3. They also practised to cut off that generation of them in the wilderness. He who lifted up his hand for them, (v. 6.) now lift up his hand against them; he who then by an oath confirmed his promise to bring them out of Egypt, now by an oath confirmed his threatenings that he would not bring them into Canaan; (v. 15, 16.) I lifted up my hand unto them, saying, As truly as I live, these men which have tempted me these ten times, shall never see the land which I sware unto their fathers, Numb. xiv. 22, 23. Ps. xcv. 11. By their contempt of God's laws, and particularly of his sabbaths, they were a bar in their own door; and that which was at the bottom of their disobedience to God, and their neglect of his institutions, was, a secret affection to the gods of Egypt; Their heart went after their idols. Note, The sins of the mind toward the world and the flesh, the money and the belly, those two great objects of spiritual idolatry, is the root of bitterness, from which springs all disobedience to the divine law; the heart that goes after those idols despises God's judgments.

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

5. The revolt of the next generation from God, by which they also made themselves obnoxious to the wrath of God; (v. 21.) The children rebelled against me too. And the same that was said of the fathers' rebellion is here said of the children's, for they were a seed of evil-doers; Moses told them that he knew their rebellion and their stiff neck, Deut. xxxi. 27. And Deut. ix. 24. You have been rebellions against the Lord from the day that I knew you. They walked not in my statutes, v. 21. Nay, they despised my statutes, v. 24. They who disobey God's statutes, despise them, they show that they have a mean opinion of them, and of him whose statutes they are. They polluted God's sabbaths, as their fathers. Note, The pollution of the sabbaths, as the pollutions of the other days, gives God just occasion to remove that holy time will keep nothing pure. It was said of the fathers, (v. 16.) that their heart went after their idols; they worshipped idols because they had an affection for them. It is said of the children, (v. 24.) that they have gone after their fathers' idols; they were grown atheistical, and had no affection for any gods at all, but they worshipped their fathers' idols because they were their fathers', and they had them before their eyes; they were used to them; and if they must have gods, they would have such as they could see, such as they could manage. And that which aggravated their disobedience to God's statutes was, that if they had done them they might have lived in them, (v. 21.) might have been a happy, thriving people. Note, They that go
contrary to their duty, go contrary to their interest; they will not obey, will not come to Christ, that they may live; and it is therefore just that they who will not live and flourish as they might in their obedience, should die and perish in their disobedience. Now the great instance of this generation's rebellion and inclination to idolatry, was the iniquity of Pharaoh, as that of their fathers was the golden calf; then the anger of the Lord was kindled against them, Numb. xxviii. 15. They had a plague in the congregation of the Lord, which, if it had not been seasonably stayed by Phinehas's zeal, had cut them all off; and yet they owned, in Joshua's time, We are not cleansed from that iniquity unto this day, Josh. xxii. 17. Ps. cxii. 29. Then it was that God said he would pour out his fiery anger upon them, (v. 21) that he lifted up his hand into them in the wilderness, when they were a second time just ready to enter Canaan, that he would scatter them among the heathen. This very thing he said to them by Moses in his parting song, Deut. xxxii. 20. Because they provoked him to jealousy with strange gods, he said, I will hide my face from them; and, v. 26, 27, he said, I would scatter them into corners, were it not that I feared the wrath of the heathen, which is upon this wilderness, (v. 22, 23) I would pour out my fiery anger upon them, but I withdrew my hand for my name's sake. Note, When the corruptions of the visible church are such, and so provoking, that we have reason to fear its total extirpation, yet then we may be confident of this, to our comfort, that God will secure his own honour, by making good his purpose, that while the world stands there shall be a church in it.

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

Spiritual judgments are the most dreadful; and these God punished them with; the statutes and judgments which the heathen observed in the worship of their idols, were not judged in which they could not live; and God gave them up to those; he made their sin to be their punishment; gave them up to a repubebrate mind, as he did the Gentile idolaters, (Rom. i. 24, 26,) gave them up to their own hearts' lust, (Ps. lxxxix. 12,) punished them for those superstitions customs which were against the written law, by giving them up to those who were for the most part the very laud of and nature; he left them to themselves to be guilty of the most impure idolatries, as in the worship of Baal-por; (he polluted them, he permitted them to pollute themselves, in their own gifts, v. 26,) and of the most barbarous idolatries, as in the worship of Moloch, when they caused their children, especially the first-born, (which God challenged a special parrty in, The first-born of thy sons shalt thou give unto me,) to pass through the fire, to be sacrificed to their idols; that thus he might make them desolate, not only that he might justly do it, but that he might do it by their own hands; for this must needs be a great weakening to their families, and a diminution of their courage and strength of their country. Note, Sometimes God makes sin to be its own punishment, and yet is not the Author of sin; and there needs no more to make men miserable than to give them up to their own vile appetites and passions. Let them be put into the hand of their own counsels, and they will ruin themselves, and make themselves desolate. And thus God makes them know that he is the Lord, and that he is a righteous God, that they themselves will be compelled to own, when they see how much their willful transgressions contribute to their own desolations. Note, Those who will not acknowledge God as the Lord their Ruler, shall be made to acknowledge him as the Lord their Judge when it is too late.

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

Here the prophet goes on with the story of their rebellions, for their further humiliation, and shows, 1. That they had persisted in them after they were settled in the land of Canaan. Though God had so many times testified his displeasure against their wicked courses, Yet in this, in the very same thing, your fathers have blasphemed me, continued to afflict me, that they also have trespassed a trespass against me, v. 27. Note, It is a great aggravation of sin, when men will not take warning by the mischievous consequences of sin in those that have gone before them; this is blaspheming God, it is speaking reproachfully of his judgments, as if
they were of no significance, and were not worth regarding.

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

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

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

2. That this generation, after they were unsettled, continued under the dominion of the same corrupt inclinations to idolatry, v. 30. He must say to the present house of Israel, some of whose elders were now sitting before him, “Are ye polluted after the manner of your fathers? After all that God has said against them by a succession of prophets, only done against you by a series of judgments, yet will you take no warning? Will you still be as bad as your fathers were, and commit the same abominations that they committed? I see you will; you are bent upon returning to the old abominations; you offer your gifts in the high places, and you make your sons to pass through the fire, either you actually do it, or you do it in purpose and imagination, and so you continue your idolatries: the elders seem now to have been projecting a coalition with the heathen; their hearts they will serve for the God of Israel, but their knees they will be at liberty to bow to the gods of the nations among whom they live, that they may have the more respect and the fairer quarter among them. Now the prophet is here ordered to tell those who are forming this scheme, of the danger of uniting the love of God and Baal, that they should have no comfort nor benefit from either. (1.) They should have no benefit by their consulting in private with the prophets of the Lord; for, because they were hearkening after idols, God would have nothing to do with them; (v. 31.) ‘As I live, saith the Lord God, I will not be inquired of by you; what he had said before, (v. 3.) having largely showed how just it was, he here repeats, as that which he would abide by. Let them not think that they honoured him by their inquiries, nor expect an answer of peace from him, as long as they continued in love and league with their idols. Note, These reap no benefit by their religion, that are not entire and sincere in it; nor can we have any comfortable communion with God in ordinances of worship whilst they are not content to appear in his sight, and no more. We make nothing of our profession, if it be but a profession. Nay, (2.) They should have no benefit from their conforming in public to the practice of their neighbours; (v. 32.) “That which comes into your mind as a piece of refined politics in the present difficult juncture, and which you would be advised to for your own preservation, and that you may not by being singular expose yourselves, and make yourselves obnoxious to the Gentiles, by adhesion to the abominations of the Heathen, it shall not be at all made known to no account to you. You say, We will be as the heathen, we will join with them in worshipping their gods, though at the same time we do not believe them to be gods, but wood and stone, and then we should be taken as the families of the countries, they will not know, or in a little while will have forgotten, that we are Jews, and will allow us the same privileges with their own countries.” Tell them, said God, “that this project shall never prosper. Either their neighbours will not admit them to join with them in their worship, or, if they do, will think never the better, but the worse, of them for it, and will look upon them as dissolvers, and not fit to be trusted, who are thus false to their God, and put a cheat upon their neighbours.” Note, There is nothing got by sinful compliances; and the carnal projects of hypocrites will stand them in no stead. It is only integrity and uprightness that will preserve men, and recommend them to God and man.

33. As I live, saith the Lord God, surely with a mighty hand, and with a stretched-out arm, and with fury poured out, will I rule over you; 34. And I will bring you out from the people, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched-out arm, and with fury poured out; 35. And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face. 36. Like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I plead with you, saith the Lord God. 37. And I will cause you to pass under the
old, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant: 33. And I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me: I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel; and ye shall know that I am the Lord. 39. As for you, O house of Israel, thus saith the Lord God, Go ye, serve ye every one his idols, and hereafter also, if ye will not hearken unto me: but pollute ye my holy name no more with your gifts, and with your idols.

40. For in my holy mountain, in the mountain of the height of Israel, saith the Lord God, there shall all the house of Israel, all of them in the land, serve me: there will I accept them, and there will I require your offerings, and the first-fruits of your oblations, with all your holy things. 41. I will accept you with your sweet savour, when I bring you out of the people, and gather you out of the countries wherein ye have been scattered; and I will be sanctified in you before the heathen. 42. And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I shall bring you into the land of Israel, into the country for the which I lifted up my hand to give it to your fathers. 43. And there shall ye remember your ways, and all your doings, wherein ye have been defiled; and ye shall loathe yourselves in your own sight, for all your evils that ye have committed.

44. And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have wrought with you for my name's sake, not according to your wicked ways, nor according to your corrupt doings, O ye house of Israel, saith the Lord God.

The design which was now on foot among the elders of Israel was, that the people of Israel, being scattered among the nations, should lay aside all their peculiarities, and conform to those among whom they lived; but God had told them that the design should not take effect, v. 32. Now, in these verses, he shows particularly how it should be frustrated. They aimed at the mingling of the families of Israel with the families of the countries; but it will prove in the issue, That the wicked Israelites, notwithstanding their compliances, shall not mingle with them in their prosperity; but shall be distinguished from them for destruction; for idolatrous Israelites, that are apostates from God, shall be sooner and more wholly punished than idolatrous Babylonians that never knew the way of righteousness. Read and tremble at the doom here passed upon them: it is backed with an oath not to be reversed: As I live, saith the Lord God, thus and thus will I deal with you. They think to make both Jerusalem and Babylon their friends by uniting between two; but God threatens that neither of them shall serve for a rest or refuge for them.

1. Babylon shall not protect them, nor any of the countries of the heathen; for God will cast them out of his protection; and then what prince, what people, what place, can serve to be a sanctuary to them? God was Israel's King of old, and had they continued his loyal subjects, he would have ruled over them with care and tenderness for their good, but now with a stretched-out arm, and with fury poured out, will I rule over them, v. 33. That power which should have been exercised for their protection, shall be exerted for their destruction. Note, There is no shaking off God's dominion, rule he will, either with the golden sceptre or with the iron rod; and not that will not yield to the power of his grace, shall be made to sink under the power of his wrath. Now when God is angry with them, though they may think that they shall be lost in the crowd of the heathen among whom they are scattered, they will be disappointed; for (v. 34.) I will gather you out of the countries wherein you are scattered; when the rebels are dispersed in battle, those that have forsaken the smoking Apparel, and brought together out of all the places whether they were scattered, to be punished by the sword of justice. They shall be brought into the wilderness of the people, (v. 35.) either into Babylon, which is called a wilderness, (ch. xix. 13.) and the desert of the sea, (Isa. xxi. 1.) or into some place, which, though full of people, shall be to them as the wilderness of Egypt, to Israel, a place where God will plead with them face to face, as he pleaded with their fathers in the wilderness of Egypt; (v. 36.) where their cases shall be, and where he will swear concerning them, that they shall never return to Canaan, as he wore concerning their fathers, that they should never come into Canaan; where he will avenge the breach of his law with as much terror as he gave it in the wilderness of Sinai. Note, God has a good action against apostates, and will find not only a proper place to plead with them in upon that action, a wilderness even in the midst of the people for that purpose.

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

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

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

49. Then said I, Ah Lord God! they say of me, Doth he not speak parables?

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAP. XXI.

In this chapter, we have, 1. An explanation of the prophecy in the close of the foregoing chapter; concerning the plagues that were to come upon the land, which the people complained they could not understand, (v. 1., 5.) with directions to the prophet to show himself deeply affected with it, v. 6, 7. II. A further prediction of the sword that was coming upon the land, by which all shall be laid waste; and this expressed very emphatically, v. 8.-17. III. A prospect given to the king of Babylon's approach to Jerusalem, to which he was directed by divine interposition of way, v. 18, 19. IV. Sentence passed upon Zedekiah king of Judah, v. 25.-27. V. The destruction of the Ammonites by the sword foretold, v. 25, 26. Thus is this chapter all threatening.

1. And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, set thy face toward Jerusalem, and drop thy word toward the holy places, and prophesy against the land of Israel. 3. And say to the land of Israel. Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I am against thee, and will draw forth my sword out of his sheath, and will cut off from thee the righteous and the wicked. 4. Seeing then that I will cut off from thee the righteous and the wicked, therefore shall my sword go forth out of his sheath against all flesh from the south to the north; 5. That all flesh may know that I the Lord have drawn forth my sword out of his sheath; it shall not return any more. 6. Sigh, therefore, thou son of man, with the breaking of thy loins; and with bitterness sigh before their eyes. 7. And it shall be, when they say unto thee, Wherefore seest thou thyself? that thou shalt answer, For the tidings, because it cometh; and every heart shall melt, and all hands shall be feeble, and every spirit shall faint, and all knees shall be weak as water; behold, it cometh, and shall be brought to pass, saith the Lord God.

The prophet had faithfully delivered the message he was intrusted with; in the close of the foregoing chapter, in the terms wherein he received it, not daring to add his own comment upon it; but when he complained that the people found fault with him for speaking parables, the word of the Lord came to him again, and gave him a key to that figurative discourse, that with it he might let the people into the meaning of it, and so silence that objection. For all men shall be rendered inexcusable at God's bar, and every mouth shall be stopped. Note, He that speaks with tongues, should pray that he may interpret, 1 Cor. xiv. 13. When we speak to people about their souls, we should study plainness, and express ourselves as we may be best understood. Christ expounded his parables to his disciples, Mark iv. 32. 34.

1. The prophet is here more plainly directed against whom to level the arrow of this prophecy He must drop his word toward the holy places, (v. 2.) toward Cæsarea the holy land, Jerusalem the holy city, the temple, the holy house. These were highly dignified above other places; but when they polluted them, that word which used to drop in the holy places, shall now drop against them; Prophecy against the land of Israel. It was the honour of Israel, that it had prophets and prophecy; but these, being despised by them, are turned against them. And justly is Zion battered with her own artillery, which used to be employed against her adversaries, seeing she knew not how to value it.

2. He is instructed, and is to instruct the people in the manner of that sword fire, which they threatened, and shall consume the forest of the south; it signified a sword drawn, the sword of war which should make the land desolate; (v. 5.) Behold, I am against thee, O land of Israel. There needs no more to make a person miserable than to have God against them; for as, if he be for us, we need not fear, whoever are against us; if he be against us, we cannot hope, whoever are for us. And God's professing people, when they revolt from him, set him against them, who used to be for them. Was the fire there of God's kindling? The sword here is his sword, which he has prepared, and which he will give commission to; it is he that will draw it out of its sheath, where it had lain latent, and threatened no harm. Note, When the sword is unsheathed among the
nations, God's hand must be eyed and owned in it. Did the fire devore every green tree and every dry tree? The sword in like manner shall cut off the rightous and the wicked. Both were invovled in the common calamities of the nation; the rightous were cut off from the land of Israel, when they were sent captives in Babylon, though perhaps few or none of them were cut off from the land of the living; and it was a threatening omen to the land of Israel, that in the beginning of its troubles such excellent men as Daniel and his fellows, and Ezekiel, could not answer, and God's nation was left to the sword. But though the sword cut off the rightous and the wicked, (for it devours one as well as another, 2 Sam. xi. 25,) yet far be it from us to think that the rightous are as the wicked, Gen. xviii. 25. No, God's graces and comforts make a great difference when his providence seem to make none. The good figs are sent into Babylon for their good, Jer. xxiv. 5, 6. It is only in outward appearance that there is one event to the rightous and to the wicked, Eccl. ix. 2. But it speaks the greatness of God's displeasure against the land of Israel. Well might it be said, His eye shall not spare, when it shall not spare, no, not the rightous in it. Since there are not righteous men sufficient to save the land, to make the justice of God the more illustrious, the few that are, shall suffer with it, and God's blessing shall prove to be some other blessing. Did the fire burn up all the faces from the south to the north? The sword shall go forth against all flesh from the south to the north; shall go forth, as God's sword, with a commission that cannot be contested, with a force that cannot be resisted. Were all flesh made to know that God kindled the fire? They shall be made to know that he has drawn forth the sword, v. 3. And, lastly, Shall the fire that is kindled never be quenched? So when this sword of the Lord is drawn against Judah and Jerusalem, the scabbard is thrown away, and it shall never be sheathed; it shall not return any more, till it has made a full end.

3. The prophet is ordered, by expressions of his own grief and concern for these calamities that were coming on, to try to make impressions of the like upon the people. When he has delivered his message, he must sigh, (v. 6.) must fetch many deep sighs, with the breaking of his loins; he must sigh as if his heart would burst, sigh with bitterness, with other expressions of bitter sorrow, and this publicly, in the sight of those to whom he delivered the foregoing message, that this might be a sermon to their eyes, as that was to their ears, and it would be well if both would work upon them. The prophet must sigh, though it was painful to himself, and made his breast sore; and though it is probable that the profane among the people would ridicule him for it, and call him a whining, canting preacher. But if we be beside ourselves, it is to God; and if this be to be vile, we will be yet more so. Note, Ministers, if they would affect others with the thing that they are to preach, they must concern themselves in the greatest sincerity affected with them; and must submit to that which may create meanness to themselves, so that it will promote the ends of their ministry. The people, observing the prophet to sigh so much, and seeing no visible occasion for it, would ask, Wherefore sighest thou? These sighs have some mystical meaning; let us know what it is; let us hear the tidings, the heavy tidings, that we shall hear shortly; the tidings come, the judgments come, which we hear the tidings of, they come apace; and then you will all sigh: nay, that will not serve, every heart shall melt, and every spirit fail; your courage will all be gone, and you will have no animating considerations to support yourselves with; and when heart and spirit fail, it will follow of course, that all hands will be feeble and unable to fight, and all knives will be weak as water and unable to flee, or to stand their ground. Those who have God's sword, when flesh and heart fail, have him to be the Strength of their heart; but those who have God against them, have no cordial for a fainting spirit, but are as Belshazzar when his thoughts trouble him, Dan. v. 6. But some people are worse frightened than hurt; may not the case be so here, and the event prove better than likely? No, behold, it stands as it is, and shall be brought to pass. It is not a bugbear that they are frightened with, but according to the fear so is the wrath, and more grievous than is feared.

3. Again, the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, 9. Son of man, prophesy, and say, Thus saith the Lord: Say, A sword, a sword is sharpened, and also furnished: 10. It is sharpened to make a sore slaughter: it is furnished that it may glitter: should we then make mirth? it contenmeth the rod of my son, as every tree. 11. And he hath given it to be furnished, that it may be handled: this sword is sharpened, and it is furnished, to give it into the hand of the slayer. 12. Cry and howl, son of man; for it shall be upon my people, it shall be upon all the princes of Israel: terrors, by reason of the sword, shall be upon my people; smite therefore upon thy thigh. 13. Because it is a trial, and what if the sword conteneth even the rod? it shall be no more, saith the Lord God. 14. Thou, therefore, son of man, prophesy, and smite thy hands together, and let the sword be doubled the third time, the sword of the slain: it is the sword of the great men that are slain, which entereth into their privy chambers. 15. I have set the point of the sword against all their gates, that their heart may faint, and their reins be multiplied. Ah! it is made bright, it is wrapped up for the slaughter. 16. Go these one way or other, either on the right hand, or on the left, whithersoever thy face is set. 17. I will also smite thy hands together, and I will cause my fury to rest: I the Lord have said it.

Here is another prophecy of the sword, which is delivered in a very affecting manner; the expressions here used are somewhat intricate, and perplex the interpreters in their first reading, but in the foregoing verses, here it is fitted up to do execution, which the prophet is commanded to lament.

Observe, 1. How the sword is here described. (1.) It is sharpened, that it may cut and wound and make a sore slaughter. The wrath of God will put an edge upon it; and whatever instruments God shall please to employ, (for it is not by the sword, Isa. xix. 13.) in executing his judgments, he will fill them with strength, courage, and fury, according to the service they are employed in. Out of the mouth of Christ goes a sharp sword, Rev. xix. 15. (2.) It is furnished, that it may glitter, to the terror of those against whom it is drawn. It shall be a kind of flaming sword. If it have rusted in the scabbard for want of use, it shall be rubbed and brightened; for
though the glory of God’s justice may seem to have been eclipsed for awhile, during the day of his patience, and the delay of his judgments, yet it will shine out again, and be made to glitter. (2.) It is a victorious sword, nothing shall stand before it; (v. 16.) It containeth the rod of my son as every tree. Israel, said God once, is my son, my first-born. The government of that people was called a rod, or sword, v. 9. (ch. xvi. 13.) The word rod is strong words, they fear for sceptres, but when the sword of God’s justice is drawn, it containeth this rod, makes nothing of it, though it be a strong rod, and the rod of his son; it is no more than any other tree. When God’s professing people are revolted from him, and in rebellion against him, his sword lesbeth them. What are they to fear more than another people? The marginal reading gives another notion of this sword; It is the rod of my son; and we know of whom God has said, (Ps. ii. 7.) Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee, and (p. 9.) Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron. This sword is that rod of iron, which containeth every tree, and will bear it down. Or, This sword is the rod of my Son, a correcting rod, for the chapter that we are now considering is the 11th and 12th, (2 Sam. viii. 14.) not to cut them off from being a people. It is a sword to others, a rod to my son.

2. How the sword is here put into the hand of the executioners; It is the rod of my Son, and he has given it that it may be handled, (v. 11.) that it may be made use of for the end for which it was drawn. It is given into the hand, not of the fencer to be picked up, but as executioners, to deliver the stroke. The sword of war my Son makes use of as a sword of justice, and to him all judgment is committed. It is made bright, (v. 15.) it is strapped up, that it may be kept safe, and clean, and sharp for the slaughter, not as Goliath’s sword was wrapped up in a cloth, only for a memorial, 1 Sam. xxix. 9.

3. How the sword is directed, and against whom it is set; (v. 12.) It shall be upon my people, they shall fall by this sword; it is repeated again, as that which is scarcely credible, that the sword of the heathen shall be upon God’s own people. Nay, it shall be upon all the princes of Israel; their dignity and power as princes shall be no more their security than their profession of religion as princes of Israel. But if the sword be at any time upon God’s own people, it is an execution upon them for crime. It is not just to arm them against every thing in it that is frightful! Yes, they have, while they conduct themselves as becomes his people; but those had not done so, and therefore terrors, by reason of the sword, shall be upon those that call themselves my people. Note, While good men are quiet, not only from evil, but from the fear of it, wicked men are disturbed not only with the sword, but with the terrors of it. Though they have furnished themselves with places of retirement, places of concealment, where they flatter themselves with hopes that they shall be safe, they will find that the sword will enter into their private chambers, and find them out there, as the frogs, when they were one of Egypt’s plagues, found admission into the chambers of their kings. The sword, the hand of the state as has been said, is directed against their gates, against all their gates, (v. 15.) against all those things with which they thought to keep it out, and fortify themselves against it. Note, The strongest gates, though they be gates of brass, ever so well barred, ever so well guarded, are no fence against the point of the sword of God’s judgments. But when that is pointed against sinners, (1.) They are ready to fear the worst; their hearts faint, so that they are not able to make any resistance. (2.) The worst comes; whatever resistance they make, it is to no purpose, but they are ruined, and their ruins are multiplied. But what need have we to observe the particular directions of this sword, when it has been represented to us in its general efficacy, and like a running warrant? (v. 16.) “Go thee, one way or other, which way thou wilt, turn to the right hand, or to the left, thou wilt find those that are obnoxious, for there are none free from guilt; and thus hast authority against them, for there are none exempt from punishment; and therefore, whithersoever thy sword is set, whether thou proceed, and like a running warrant, from the blood of the slain, from the flat of the mighty, thou shalt never return empty,” 2 Sam. i. 22. Note, So full is the world of wicked people, that, which way soever God’s judgments go forth, they will find work, will find matter to work upon. That fire will never go out on this earth for want of fuel. And such various methods God has for executing their threatenings, and for their satisfaction, is as still as it was at first, when it flamed in the hand of the cherubins, it turns every way, Gen. iii. 24.

4. What is the nature of this sword, and what are its intentions and limitations of it as to the people of God, v. 13. It is a correction; it is designed to be so; the sword to others, a rod to my son. This is a comfortable word which comes in at the midst of things which are so terrible. Though they are to be deprived of their sceptre, it is still as it was at first, when it flamed in the hand of the cherubins, it turns every way, Gen. iii. 24. Note, When threatening judgments are abroad, it is good to suppose the worst that may be the consequences of them, that we may provide accordingly.

What if the sword containeth the tribe or sceptre? of that of Judah and the house of David, so some think Shobet here signifies; what if it should aim at the ruin of our government? If it do, the Lord is righteous, and will be gracious notwithstanding. But, (3.) These fears are silenced with an assurance that it is not so, the sword shall not forget itself, nor the errand on which it is sent; It is a trial, and it is no more than a trial. He that sends it, makes what use of it, and sets what bounds to it, he pleases. Here shall its peculiar power be exerted, it is no more than a trial of our government, to the people of God, when his judgments are abroad, and they are ready to tremble for fear of them, that, whatever they are to others, to them they are but trials; and when they are tried, they shall come forth as gold, and the proving of their faith shall be the improving of it.

5. Here the prophet and the people must show themselves affected with these judgments threatenings. (1.) The prophet must be very serious in de-
18. The word of the Lord came unto me again, saying, 19. Also, thou son of man, appoint thee two ways, that the sword of the king of Babylon may come: both ivain shall come forth out of one land; and choose thou a place, choose it at the head of the way to the city. 20. Appoint a way, that the sword may come to Rabbath of the Ammonites, and to Judah in Jerusalem the defended. 21. For the king of Babylon stood at the parting of the way, at the head of the two ways, to use divination: he made his arrows bright, he consulted with images, he looked in the liver. 22. At his right hand was the divination for Jerusalem, to appoint captains, to open the mouth in the slaughter, to lift up the voice with shouting, to appoint battering rams against the gates, to cast a mount, and to build a fort. 23. And it shall be unto them as a false divination in their sight, to them that have sworn oaths: but he will call to remembrance the iniquity, that they may be taken. 24. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Because ye have made your iniquity to be remembered, in that your transgressions are discovered, so that in all your doings your sins do appear; because, I say, that ye are come to remembrance, ye shall be taken with the hand. 25. And thou, profane wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come, when iniquity shall have an end; 26. Thus saith the Lord God, Remove the diadem, and take off the crown; this shall not be the same: exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high. 27. I will overturn, overturn, overturn it; and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him.

The prophet, in the verses before, had showed them the sword coming; he here shows them that sword coming against them, that they might not flatter themselves that by some means or other it should be diverted a contrary way. 1. He must see and show the Chaldean army coming against Jerusalem, and determined by a supreme power so to do. The prophet must appoint him two ways, he must upon a paper draw out two roads, (v. 19.) as sometimes is done in maps; and he must place the Babylonians upon one road, and the Jews upon the other road, for there they will make a stand. They both came out of the same land, but when they come to the place where one road leads to Rabbah, the head city of the Ammonites, and the other to Jerusalem, he makes a pause; for though he is resolved to be the ruin of both, yet he is not determined which to attack first; here his politics and his policy leads him at a loss. The sword must go to either to Rabbah, or to Judah in Jerusalem. Many of the inhabitants of Judah had now taken shelter in Jerusalem, and all the interests of the country were bound up in the safety of the city, and therefore it is called Judah in Jerusalem the defended; so strongly fortified was it, both by nature and art, that it was thought impregnable, Lam. iv. 21. The descriptions of this prophet must scarce deserve the name of prophecy; the king of Babylon is at; (v. 21.) for the king of Babylon stood; he shall stand considering what course to take, at the head of the two ways. Though he was a prince of great foresight and great resolution, yet, it seems, he knew neither his own interest nor his own mind. Let not the wise man then glory in his wisdom nor the mighty man in his arbitrary power, for even those that may do what they will, seldom know what to do for the best. Now observe, 1. The method he took to come to a resolution; he
and division, applied himself to a higher and invisible power, perhaps to the determination of Providence by a lot, in order to which he made his arrows bright, that were to be drawn for the lots, in honour of the solemnity. Perhaps Jerusalem was written on one arrow, and Rabbah on the other, and that which was first drawn out of the quiver he determined to attack first. Or, he applied himself to the direction of some pretended oracle; he consulted with images or Teraphim, expecting to receive audible answers from them. Or, to the observations which the augurs made upon the entrails of the sacrifices, he looked in the liver, whether the position of that pretended good or ill luck. Note, It is a mortification to the pride of the wise men of the earth, that in difficult cases they have been glad to make to the people the history of their folly, that they have taken such ridiculous ways of doing it; when in cases proper for an appeal to Providence, it is sufficient that the lot be cast into the lap, with that prayer, Give a perfect lot, and a firm belief that the disposal thereof is not fortuitous, but of the Lord, Prov. xvi. 33. 2. The resolution he was hereby brought to. Every one of these steps served his own purposes, and directed him to go to Jerusalem, v. 22. The divination for Jerusalem happened to be at his right hand, which, according to the rules of divination, determined him that way. Note, What services God designs men for, he will be sure in his providence to lead them to, though perhaps they themselves are not aware what guidance the success of their arts, being the mark hit up, the campaign is presently opened with the siege of that important place. Captains are appointed for the command of the forces to be employed in the siege, who must open the mouth in the slaughter, must give directions to the soldiers what to do, and make speeches to animate them. Orders are given to provide every thing necessary for carrying on the siege with vigour; batteries, rams must be prepared, and forts built. What pains, what cost, are men at to destroy one another! 11. He must show both the people and the prince that they bring this destruction upon themselves by their own sin. 1. The people do so, v. 23, 24. They slight the notices that are given them of the judgment coming, and so provoke to them a false divination; they are both hardened and weakened to repentance. When they hear that Nebuchadnezzar by his divinations is directed to Jerusalem, and assured of success in that enterprise, they laugh at it, and continue secure, calling it a false divination; because they have sworn oaths, they have joined in a solemn league with the Egyptians, and they depend upon the promise they have made them to raise up, or upon the assurance which the false prophets have given them that it shall be raised. Or, it may refer to the oaths of allegiance they had sworn to the king of Babylon, but had violated; for which treachery of theirs God had given them up to a judicial blindness, so that the fairest warnings given them were slighted by them as false divinations. Note, It is not strange if those who make a jest of the signs and sacred oaths, can make a jest likewise of the most sacred oracles: for where will a profane mind stop? But shall their unbelief invalidate the counsel of God? Are they safe because they are secure? By no means; nay, the contempt they put upon divine warnings is a sin that brings to rememberance their other sins, and they may thank themselves if they be not remembered against them. (1.) Their present wickedness is discovered. Now that God is contending with them, so perverse and obstinate are they, that, whatever they offer in their own defence, docs but add to their offences; they never conducted themselves so ill as they did now that they had the lowest call given them to repent and reform; so that in all your doings your sins do appear. Turn you which way you will you show a black side. This is too true of every one of us; for not only there is none that lives and sins not, but there is not a just man upon earth that does good and sins not. Our best services have such ills of weakness, and folly, and imperfection, and so much evil is present with us, we cannot do good without it that may be done with sorrow and shame. In all our doings, and in all our sayings too, our sins do appear, and witness against us, so that if we were under the law we were undone. (2.) This brings to mind their former wickedness; "You have made your integrity to be remembered, not by yourselves that it might be reproved of God, but for your justice you have been remembered," etc. (Pro. ii. 16.) "You shall be taken with the hand that God had appointed to seize you and to hold you, and out of which you cannot escape." Men are said to be God's hand, when they are made use of as the ministers of his justice, Ps. xvi. 4. Note, Those who will not be taken with the word of God's grace, shall at last be taken by the hand of his wrath. 2. As some of his predecessors, had yet had cause to merit this character. He was himself proud, lost to everything that is virtuous and sacred. And he was wicked, as he promoted sin among his people; he sinned, and made Israel to sin. Note, Profaneness and wickedness are bad in any, but worst of all in a prince, a prince of Israel; who, as an Israeleite, should know better himself, and, as a prince, give a better example, and have a better influence on those about him. (2.) He reads him his doom. His iniquity has an end, the measure of it is full, and therefore his day is come, the day of his punishment, the day of divine vengeance. Note, Though they who are wicked and profane may flourish awhile, yet their day will come to full. The sentence here passed is, [1.] That Zedekiah shall be defiled; he has forfeited his crown, and he shall no longer wear it; he has by his profaneness profaned his crown, and it shall be cast to the ground; (v. 25.) Remove the diadem. Crowns and diadems are lesseable things; it is only in the other world that there is a crown of glory that fades not away: a kingdom that cannot be moved. The Chaldee Paraphrase expands it thus, Zedekiah shall lose his crown, the chief priest shall take away his crown from Zedekiah the chief priest, and I will take away the crown from Zedekiah the king, neither this nor that shall abide in his place, but shall be removed. This shall not be the same; not the same he has been; this not this; so the word is. Profane and wicked perhaps he is as he has been, but not prince of Israel as he has been. Note, Men lose their dignity by their iniquity. Their profaneness and wickedness remove their diadems, and take off their crown, and make them the reverse of what they were. [2.] That great confusion and disorder in the state shall follow hereupon; every thing shall be turned upside down. The conqueror shall take a pride in exciting him that is low, and abusing
him that is high, preserving some, and degrading others, at his pleasure, without any regard either to right or merit. [3.] Attempts to re-establish the government shall be blasted, and come to nothing; Gedaliah's particularly, and Ishmael's, who was of the seed-royal, to which the Chaldean Paraphrase refers this; whether of them shall be able to take anything in the first project, and then another; for who can build up what God will throw down? [4.] This monarchy will never be restored, till it is fixed for perpetuity in the hands of the Messiah. There shall be no more kings of the house of David after Zedekiah, till Christ comes, whose right the kingdom is, and whose right to it was to have its full accomplishment, and I will give it him. He shall have the throne of his father David, Luke i. 32. Immediately before the coming of Christ there was a long eclipse of the royal dignity, as there was also a falling of the spirit of prophecy, that his shining forth in the fulness of time both as King and Prophet might appear the more illustrious. Note, Christ has an incontestable title to the dominion and sovereignty both in the church and in the world; the kingdom is his right. And having the right, he shall in due time have the possession; I will give it him; and there shall be a general overturning of all, rather than he shall come short of his right; and a certain overturning of all the opposition that stands in his way, to make room for him, Dom. it. 43. 1 Cor. xv. 53. This is mentioned here for the comfort of those who feared that the promise made in David would fail for evermore. "No," says God, "that promise is sure, for the Messiah's kingdom shall last for ever."

23. And thou, son of man, prophesy, and say, Thus saith the Lord God concerning the Ammonites, and concerning their reproach; even say thou, The sword, the sword is drawn; for the slaughter it is furbished, to consume because of the glittering.

29. While they see vanity unto thee, while they divide a lie unto thee, to bring thee upon the necks of them that are slain, of the wicked, whose day is come, when their iniquity shall have an end. 30. Shall I cause it to return into his sheath? I will judge thee in the place where thou wast created, in the land of thy nativity. 31. And I will pour out mine indignation upon thee; I will blow against thee in the fire of my wrath; and I will deliver thee into the hand of brutish men, and skilful to destroy.

32. Thou shalt be for fuel to the fire; thy blood shall be in the midst of the land; thou shalt be no more remembered; for I the Lord have spoken it.

The prediction of the destruction of the Ammonites, which was effected by Nebuchadnezzar about five years after the destruction of Jerusalem, seems to come in here upon occasion of the king of Baby lon's diverting his design against Babylon, when he turned it upon Jerusalem; upon this the Ammonites grew very insolent, and triumphed over Jerusalem; but the prophet must let them know that fornication is no acquittance; the depriver is not a pardoner; their day also is at hand; their turn comes next, and it will be but a poor satisfaction to them, that they are to be devoured last, to be last executed.

1. The sin of the Ammonites is here intimated; it is their reproach, v. 28. (1.) The reproach they put upon themselves when they hearkened to their false prophets, (for such it seems there were among them as well as among the Jews,) who pretended to foretell their perpetual safety in the midst of the desolations that were made of the countries round about them; "They see vanity unto thee, and divine a lie, v. 29. They flatter thee with promises of peace, and the destruction of thee to be imposed upon them, and to encourage them therein by giving credit to them." Note, Those that feed themselves with a self-conceit in the day of their prosperity, prepare matter for a self-reproach in the day of their calamity. (2.) The re proach they put upon the Israel of God, when they triumphed in their afflictions, and thereby added affliation to the vengeance of their just judgments inflicted on them when their iniquity had an end, when the measure of it was full; we shall meet with this again, ch. xxx. 3, 5c. Note, These are ripening space for misery, who trample upon the people of God in their distress, whereas they ought to tremble when judgment begins at the house of God.

The utter destruction of the Ammonites is threatened. For the reproach cast on the church by her neighbours will be returned into their own bosom, Ps. lxxix. 12. Let us see how terrible the threatening is, and the destruction will be. (1.) It shall come from the wrath of God, who resents the indignities and injuries done to his people as done to himself; (v. 31.) I will pour out my indignation upon thee in the bowels of fire; and none shall intercede for thee; the least drop of divine indignation and wrath will create tribulation and anguish enough to the soul of man that does evil; what then would a full stream of that indignation and wrath do? "I will blow against thee in the fire of my wrath; I will blow up the fire of my wrath against thee, it shall burn with the utmost vehemence." Then shalt be for fuel to this fire, v. 32. Note, When men make themselves tools and instruments of God's wrath, they are very commonly used by it, and it is inflamed by them. (2. ) It shall be effected by the sword of war; to them he must cry, as before to Israel, because they had triumphed in Israel's overthrow, The sword, the sword is drawn, v. 28. (compare v. 9, 10.) It is drawn to consume because of the glittering, because it is brandished and glitters, and is not to be made use of. Gods executions will answer his preparations. This sword, when it is drawn, shall not return into its sheath (v. 50.) till it has done the work for which it was drawn. When the sword is drawn, it does not return till God causes it to return, and he is in one mind, and who can turn him? Who can change his purpose? (3.) The persons employed in it are brutish men, and skilful to destroy. Men of this brutish character as this have the wit of men to do the work of wild beasts; human reason, which makes them skilful, but no human compassion, which makes them skilful only to destroy; though they are the scandal of mankind, yet sometimes they are made use of to serve God's purposes; God delivers the Ammonites into the hands of such, and justly, for they themselves were brutish, and delighted in the destruction of God's people. We have reason to pray, as Paul desired to be praved for, that we may be delivered from wicked and unreasonable men, (2 Thess. iii. 2.) men that seem made for doing mischief. (4.) The place where they should thus be reckoned with; "I will judge thee there where thou wast created, where thou was
first formed into a people, and where thou hast been settled ever since, and therefore where thou seest to have taken root, the land of thy nativity shall be the land of thy destruction." Note, God can bring ruin upon us there where we are most secure; and turn us out of that land which we thought we had a title to not to be disputed, and a possession of not to be disturbed; Thy blood shall be shed not only in thy borders, but in the midst of the land. Lastiy, it shall be an irreparable ruin: "Though thou mayest think to recover thyself, it is in vain to think of it, thou shalt be no more remembered with any respect," Ps. ix. 6. Justly is their name blotted out, who would have Israel's name for ever lost.

CHAP. XXII.

Here are three several messages which God intrusts the prophet to deliver concerning Judah and Jerusalem, and all to the same purport, to show them their sins, and the judgments that were coming upon them for these sins. 1. Here is a catalogue of their sins, by which they had exposed themselves to shame, and for which God would bring them to ruin, v. 1—16. 2. They are here compared to dross, and are condemned as dross to the fire, v. 17—22. 3. All orders and degrees of men among them are here found guilty of the neglect of the duty of their place, and of having contributed to the national guilt, which therefore, since none appeared as intercessors, they must all expect to share in the punishment of, v. 23—31.

1. Moreover, the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, 2. Now, thou son of man, wilt thou judge, wilt thou judge the bloody city? yea, thou shalt shew her all her abominations. 3. Then say thou, Thus saith the Lord God, The city shedeth blood in the midst of it, that her time may come; and maketh idols against herself to defile herself. 4. Thou art become guilty in thy blood that thou hast shed; and hast defiled thyself in thine idols which thou hast made; and thou hast caused thy days to draw near, and art come even unto thy years: therefore have I made thee a reproach unto the heathen, and a mocking to all countries. 5. Those that be near, and those that be far from thee, shall mock thee, which art infamous and much vexed. 6. Behold, the princes of Israel, every one were in thee to their power to shed blood. 7. In thee have they set light by father and mother; in the midst of thee have they dealt by oppression with the stranger; in thee have they vexed the fatherless and the widow. 8. Thou hast despised my holy things, and hast profaned my sabbaths. 9. In thee are men that carry tales to shed blood; and in thee they eat upon the mountains; in the midst of thee they commit lewdness; 10. In thee have they discovered their father's nakedness; in thee have they humbled her that was set apart for pollution. 11. And one hath committed abomination with his neighbour's wife; and another hath lewdly defiled his daughter-in-law; and another in thee hath humbled his sister, his father's daughter. 12. In thee have they taken gifts to shed blood; thou hast taken usury and increase, and thou hast greedily gained of thy neighbours by extortion, and hast forgotten me, saith the Lord God. 13. Behold, therefore, I have smitten my hand at thy dishonest gain which thou hast made, and at thy blood which hath been in the midst of thee. 14. Can thy heart endure, or can thy hands be strong, in the days that I shall deal with thee? I the Lord have spoken it, and will do it. 15. And I will scatter thee among the heathen, and disperse thee in the countries, and will consume thy filthiness out of thee. 16. And thou shalt take thine inheritance in thyself in the sight of the heathen, and thou shalt know that I am the Lord.

In these verses, the prophet by a commission from Heaven is set as a judge upon the bench, and Jerusalem is made to hold her hand as a prisoner at the bar; and if prophets were set over other nations, much more over God's nation, Jer. i. 10. This prophet is authorized to judge the bloody city; the city of blood. Jerusalem is so called, not only because she had been guilty of the punishment of bloodshed, but because her crimes in general were bloody crimes, (ch. vii. 23.) such as polluted her in blood, and for which she deserved to have blood given her to drink. Now the business of a judge with a malefactor is to convict him of his crimes, and then to pass sentence upon him for them. These two sins which Jerusalem is to do her own, and that to the full extent of them.

1. He is to find Jerusalem guilty of many heinous crimes here enumerated in a long bill of indictment, and it is billa vero—a true bill; so he writes upon it, whose judgment, we are sure, is according to truth. He must show her all her abominations, (v. 2.) that God may be justified in all the desolations brought upon her. Let us take a view of all the particular sins which Jerusalem here stands charged with; and they are all exceedingly hateful.

1. Murder; The city sheds blood, not only in the suburbs, where the strangers dwell, but in the midst of it, where, one would think, the magistrates would, if any where, be vigilant. Even there people were murdered either in duels or by secret assasinations and poisonings, or in the courts of justice under colour of law, and there was no care taken to discover and punish the murderers, according to the law, (Gen. ix. 6.) no, nor so much as the ceremony used to expiate an uncertain murder, (Deut. xxv. 1.) and so the guilt and pollution remains upon the city. Thus thou art become guilty in thy blood that thou hast shed, v. 4. This crime is insisted most upon, for it was Jerusalem's main crime; the heaping sin which God is said to say that which the Lord would not pardon, 2 Kings xxiv. 4. (1.) The princes of Israel, who should have been the protectors of injured innocence, every one were to their power to shed blood, v. 6. They thirsted for it, and delighted in it, and whoever came within their power were sure to feel it; whoever lay at their mercy were sure to find none. (2.) There were those who carried tales to shed blood, v. 9. They told lies of men to the princes, to whom they knew it would be pleasing, to incense them against them; or betrayed what passed in private conversation, to make mischief among neighbours, and set them together by the ears, to bite, and devour, and worry one another, even to death. Note, Those who, by giving injudicious characters, and telling ill-natured stories of their neighbours, sow
discord among brethren, will be accountable for all the mischief that follows upon it; as he that kindles a fire will be for all the hurt it does. (3.) There were those who took gifts to shed blood, (v. 12.) who were hired with money to swear a man out of his life, or, if they were upon a jury, would be bribed to the contrary side. While this monstrous, bloody work of this kind was done in Jerusalem, we may well conclude, (1.) That men's consciences were become wretchedly profligate and scared, and their hearts hardened; for they would stick at no wickedness, which would not stick at this. (2.) That abundance of quiet, harmless, good people were made away with, whereby as the guilty, the chief has been removed, so the number of the just that should have stood in the gap, to turn away the wrath of God, was diminished. 2. Idolatry; She makes idols against herself to destroy herself, v. 3. And again, (v. 4.) Thou hast defiled thyself in thine idols which thou hast made. Note, Those who make idols for themselves will be found to have made them against themselves, for idolaters put a cheat upon themselves, and prepare destruction for themselves; besides that thereby they pollute themselves, they render themselves odious in the eyes of the just and jealous God, and even their mind and conscience are defiled, so that to them nothing is pure. Those who did not make idols themselves, were not found guilty of eating upon the mountains, or high places, (v. 9.) in honour of the idols, and in communion with idolaters. 3. Disobedience to parents. (v. 7.) In thine own children set light by their father and mother, mocked them, cursed them, and despised to obey them, which was a sign of more than ordinary corruption of nature as well as manners, and a disposition to all manner of disorder. Isa. iii. 3. They that set light by their parents, are in the high way to all wickedness. God had made many wholesome laws for the support of the paternal authority, but no care was taken to put them in execution. When, as the Pharisees in their day taught children, under pretence of respect to the Corban, to set light by their parents, and refuse to maintain them, Matth. xv. 5.

4. Oppression and extortion. To enrich themselves, they wronged the poor; (v. 7.) They dealt by oppression and deceit with the stranger; taking away from him his right, and his inheritance, the laws and customs of the country. In Jerusalem, that should have been a sanctuary to the oppressed, they vexed the fatherless and widows by unreasonable demands and inquisitions, or troublesome law-suits, in which might prevail against right; Thou hast taken away and increase; (v. 12.) not only there are those in thee that do it, but thou hast done it. It was an act of the city or community, the public money, which which should have been employed in public charity, is put out to usury, with extortion. Thou hast greedily gained of thy neighbours by violence and wrong. For neighbours to gain by one another in a way of fair trading is well, but those who are greedy of gain will not be held within the rules of equity. (v. 9.) Profit was an act of Sabbath and other holy things. This commonly goes along with the other sins for which they here stand indicted; (v. 8.) Thou hast despised mine holy days, holy oracles, holy ordinances; the rites which God appointed were thought too plain, too ordinary, they despised them, and therefore were found of the customs of the heathen. Note, Innomularity and dishonesty are commonly joined together, worketh together with the worship of God; Thou hast profaned not thy sabbaths. There was not in Jerusalem that face of Sabbath-peculation that one would have expected in the holy city. Sabbath-breaking is an iniquity that is an inlet to all iniquity. Many have owned it to contribute as much to their own ruin as any thing.

5. Uncleanness and all manner of seventh-commandment sins, fruits of those vile affections to which God in a way of righteous judgment gives up men, to punish them for their idolatry and profaneness. 1. Thou didst浑y the sabbath, for it was designed for its purity, but now in the midst of thee they commit lewdness; (v. 9.) it goes barbacled, though in the most scandalous instances; as that of a man's having his father's wife, which is the discovery of the father's nakedness, (v. 10.) and is a sin not to be named among Christians without the utmost detestation, (2 Cor. v. 1.) and was made a capital crime by the law of Moses, (Deut. xxi. 24, 25.) those who were guilty of such a thing were put to death. The time of their being punished for it has not been observed, Exe. iii. 6. For they have humbled her that was set apart for her pollution. They made nothing of committing lewdness with a neighbour's wife, with a daughter-in-law, or a sister, v. 11. And shall not God visit for these things? 7. Unmindfulness of God was at the bottom of all this wickedness; (v. 12.) "Thou hast forgotten me, else thou wouldst not have done thus." Note, Sinners do that which provokes God, because they forget him; they forget their descent from him, dependence on him, and obligations to him; they forget how valuable his favour is, which they make themselves unfruit for; and how formidable his wrath, which they make themselves obnoxious to. They that forswert their ways, forget the Lord their God, Jer. iii. 21.

2. He is to pass sentence upon Jerusalem for these crimes.

1. Let her know that she has filled up the measure of her iniquity, and that her sins are such as forbid delays, and call for speedy vengeance. She has made her time to come, (v. 3.) her days to draw near; and she is come to her years of maturity for punishment, (v. 4.) as an heir that is come to age, and is ready for his inheritance. God would have been longer with them, but they were arrived at such a pitch of impudence in sin, that God could not in honour give them a further day. Note, Abused patience will at last be weary of forbearing. And when sinners (as Solomon speaks) grow overmuch wicked, they die before their time, (Exe. vii. 17.) and are excluded from their reprobation.

2. Let her know that she has exposed herself, and therefore God has justly exposed her, to the contempt and scorn of all her neighbours; (v. 4.) I have made thee a reproach to the heathen, both thou who art near; who are eye-witnesses of Jerusalem's apostacy and degeneracy; and those afar off; who, though at a distance, will think it worth taking notice of, if they shall all mock thee. While they were reproached by their neighbours for their adherence to God, it was their honour, and they might be sure that God would roll away their reproach. But now that they are laughed at for their revolt from God, they must lie down in their shame, and must say, The Lord is righteous. They make a mock at Jerusalem, both because her sins had been very common, and because she is infamous, polluted in name, and has quite lost her credit; and because her punishment is very grievous, she is much vexed, and frets without measure at her troubles. Note, Those who vex most at their troubles, have commonly those about them who will be so much the more apt to make a jest of them.

3. Let her know that God is displeased, highly displeased, with the wickedness and deeds and will witness against it; (v. 13.) I have smitten my hand at thy dishonest gain. God, both by his precepts, and by his providence, revealed his wrath from heaven against their ungodliness and unrighteous-
17. And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, 18. Son of man, the house of Israel is to me become dross: all they are brass, and tin, and iron, and lead, in the midst of the furnace; they are even the dross of silver. 19. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Because ye are all become dross, behold, therefore, I will gather you into the midst of Jerusalem. 20. As they gather silver, and brass, and iron, and lead, and tin, into the midst of the furnace, to blow the fire upon it, to melt it; so will I gather you in mine anger and in my fury, and I will leave you there, and melt you. 21. Ye shall be consumed in the midst of the furnace, and ye shall be melted in the midst thereof; and ye shall know that I the Lord have poure out my fury upon you.

The same melancholy string is still harped upon; and various turns given it, to make it affecting, that it may be influencing. The prophet must here show, or at least it is here shown him, that the whole house of Israel is become as dross, and that as dross they shall be consumed. What David has said concerning the wicked ones of the world, is here said concerning the wicked ones of the church, now that it is corrupt and degenerate; (Ps. cxix. 119.) Thou hast cast all the wicked of the earth like dross.

1. See here how the wretched degeneracy of the house of Israel is described. That state, in David's and Solomon's time, had been a head of gold; when the kingdoms were divided, it was as the arms of silver. But now, (1.) It is degenerated into baser metal, of no value in comparison with what it formerly was. They were all brass, and iron, and lead, and brass; which some make to signify divers classes of sinners among them; their being brass denotes the impudence of some in their wickedness, they are brazen-faced, and cannot blush; their shoes had been iron and brass, (Deut. xxxiii. 25.) but now their brow is so, Isa. liv. 4. Their being tin denotes the hypocritical profession of piety, with which many of them are covered. They are all brass, and iron, and lead, but have a specious show, but no intrinsic worth. Their being iron denotes the cruel disposition of some, and their delight in war, according to the character of the iron age. Their being lead denotes their dulness, sottishness, and stupidity: though soft and pliable to evil, yet heavy and not movable to good. How is the gold become dross? How is the most fine gold changed? This is Jerusalem's degeneracy bewailed, Lam. iv. 1. Yet this is not the worst; these metals, though of less value, are yet of good use. But, (2.) The house of Israel is become dross to me. So she is in God's account, whatever she is in her own and her neighbours' account. They were silver, but now they are even the dross of silver; the word signifies all the dirt, and rubbish, and worthless stuff, that are separated from the silver in the washing, melting, and refining of it.
Simmers, and especially degenerate professors, are in God's account as dross; vile, and contemptible, and of no account, as the evil figs which could not be eaten, they were so evil. They are useless and fit for nothing; of no consistency with themselves, and no service to man.

Though the fearful destruction of this degenerate house of Israel is foretold. They are all gathered together in Jerusalem; thither people fled from all parts of the country as to a city of refuge, not only because it was a strong city, but because it was the holy city. Now God tells them that their flocking into Jerusalem, which they intended for their security, should be as the gathering of various sorts of metal into a furnace, where they are afterwards to be melted down to have the dross separated from them. They are in the midst of Jerusalem, surrounded by the forces of the enemy; and, being thus enclosed, (1.) The fire of God's wrath shall be kindled upon this furnace, and it shall be blown, to make it burn fiercely and strongly, v. 20, 21. God will gather them in his anger and fury. The blowing of the fire makes a great noise, so will the judgments of God upon Jerusalem; when God stirs up himself to execute judgments upon a provoking people, from the consideration of his own glory, and the necessity of making some examples, then he may be said to blow the fire of his wrath against sin and sinners, to heat the furnace seven times hotter. (2.) The several sorts of metal gathered in it shall be melted; by a complication of judgments, as by a raging fire, their constitution shall be dissolved, they shall lose all their former shape and strength, and shall be utterly unable to stand before the wrath of God. The various sorts of sinners shall be melted down together, and united in a common overflow, as brass and lead in the same furnace; as tares are bound in bundles for the fire. They came together into Jerusalem as a place of defence, but God brought them together to be destroyed, placed execution. (3.) God will leave them in the furnace; v. 20.) I will gather you into the furnace, and will leave you there. When God brings his own people into the furnace, he sits by them as the refiner by his gold, to see that they be not continued there any longer than is fitting and needful; but he will bring these people into the furnace, as men throw dross into it, which they design shall be consumed, and then take the dross out of it, but leave it there. Compare with this Hos. v. 14. I will tear and go away. (4.) Hereto the dross shall be wholly separated, and the good metal purified, the impenitent shall be destroyed, and the penitent reformed and fitted for deliverance; Take away the dross from the silver, and there shall come forth a vessel for the inner, Prov. xxv. This judgment shall do that in the house of Israel, for the doing of which other methods had been tried in vain, and reproube silver shall they no more be called, Jer. vi. 30.

23. And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, 24. Son of man, say unto her, Thou art the land that is not cleansed, nor rained upon in the day of indignation. 25. There is a conspiracy of her prophets in the midst thereof, like a roaring lion ravening the prey: they have devoured souls; they have taken the treasure and precious things; they have made her many widows in the midst thereof. 26. Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned my holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they shewed difference between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from my sab baths, and I am profaned among them. 27. Her princes in the midst thereof are like wolves ravening the prey, to shed blood, and to destroy souls, to get dishonest gain. 28. And her prophets have daubed them with untempered mortar, seeing vanity, and divining lies unto them, saying, Thus saith the Lord God, when the Lord hath not spoken. 29. The people of the land have used oppression, and exercised robbery, and have vexed the poor and needy; yea, they have oppressed the stranger wrongfully. 30. And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found none. 31. Therefore have I poured out mine indignation upon them; I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath: their own way have I recompensed upon their heads, saith the Lord God.

Here is,

1. A general idea given of the land of Israel, how well it deserved the judgments coming to destroy it, and how much it needed these judgments to repress it. Let as prophet tell her plainly, Thou art the land that is not cleansed, not refined as metal is, and therefore needest to be again put into the furnace; means and methods of reformation have been ineffectual; thou art not rained upon in the day of indignation. This was one of the judgments which God brought upon them in the day of his wrath, he withheld the rain from them, Jer. iii. 4. ‘When thou art under the tokens of God's displeasure, even in the day of indignation thou art not rained upon; thou hast not received instruction by the prophets, whose doctrine is said to descend as the rain.' Or, "When thou art corrected, thou art not cleansed, thy filth is not carried away as that in the streets is by a sweeping rain. Nay, though it be a day of indignation with thee, yet thy filthiness, which should be done away, is become more offensive, as that of a city is in dry weather, when it is not rained upon." Or, "Thou hast nothing to refresh and comfort thyself with in the day of indignation; thou art not rained upon by divine consolations." So the rich man in torment had not a drop of water, or rain to cool his tongue.

II. A particular charge drawn up against the several orders and degrees of men among them, which shows that they had all helped to fill the measure of the nation's guilt, but none had done any thing toward the emptying of it; they are therefore all alike.

1. They have every one corrupted his way, and those who should have been the brightest examples of virtue, were ringleaders in iniquity and patterns of vices. (v. 23.) The prophets, who pretended to make known the mind of God to them, were not only deceivers, but diviners, (p. 23.) and hardened them in their wickedness, both by their preaching, wherein they promised them impunity and prosperity, and by their conversation, in which they were as profligate as any. There is a conspiracy of her prophets against God and religion, against the true prophets and all good men; they conspired together to be all in one song. As Ahah's prophets were, to assure them of peace in their sinful ways. Note. The unity
which is found among pretenders to infallibility, and which they so much boast of, is only the result of a secret conspiracy against the truth. Satan is not divided against himself. The prophets are in conspiracy with the murderers and oppressors, to patronize and protect them in their wickedness, and justify what they did with their false prophecies, provided they may conciliate the people with them. The princes are like a roaring lion ravening the prey; they thunder out threats against them whose ruin is aimed at, terrify them, or make them odious to the people, and so make themselves masters, [1.] Of their lives; They have devoured souls, have been necessary to the shedding of the blood of many an innocent person, and so have made many to become sorrowful, and to rush forth in arms. They have persecuted those to death, who witnessed against their pretensions to prophecy, and would not be imposed upon by their counterfeit commission. Or, They devoured souls by flattering sinners into a false peace and a vain hope, and seducing them into the paths of sin, which would be their eternal ruin. Note, Those who drew men to wickedness, and encouraged them in it, and, by flattering opinions, and the like, brought them into a false security, did a great deal of mischief. [2.] Of their estates; when Naboth is slain, they take possession of his vineyard; They have seized the treasure and precious things, as forfeited; some ways or other they had of devouring the widows' houses, as the Pharisees, Matt. xxviii. 14. Or, They got this treasure, and all these precious things, as fees for false and flattering prophecies; for he that devours and slays, is the spoiler against him, Mic. iii. 5. It was said with jealousy when such men as these passed for prophets. [3.] Of their persons, who were teachers by office, and the custodians of the sacred things, and should have called the false prophets to account, were as bad as they. [v. 25.] They violated the law of God, which they should have observed, and taught others to observe; they made no conscience of the law of the priesthood, but openly brake it, and with contempt, as Hophni and Phinehas. They did what they had a mind, with an express non-esteem—notwithstanding, to the word of God. And how should they teach the people their duty, who lived in contradiction to their own? [v. 26.] They profaned God's holy things, about which they were to minister, and which were to be kept holy; they were taken from the profanation of. They suffered those to eat of the holy things, which were unqualified by the law, the table of the Lord was contemned with them; by dealing in holy things with such unhallowed hands they did themselves profane them. [v. 27.] They did not themselves put a difference, nor did they show the people how to put a difference, between the holy and profane, the clean and unclean, according to the directions and distinctions of the law. They did not exclude those from God's courts who were excluded by the law, nor teach the people to observe the difference the law had made between food clean and unclean, between times and places holy and common; but lived at large themselves, and encouraged the people to do so too. [v. 28.] They hid their eyes from God's and the unclean, according to the directions and distinctions of the law. They did not exclude those from God's courts who were excluded by the law, nor teach the people to observe the difference the law had made between food clean and unclean, between times and places holy and common; but lived at large themselves, and encouraged the people to do so too. [v. 29.] They were false witnesses. They hid their eyes from God's and the unclean, according to the directions and distinctions of the law. They did not exclude those from God's courts who were excluded by the law, nor teach the people to observe the difference the law had made between food clean and unclean, between times and places holy and common; but lived at large themselves, and encouraged the people to do so too. [v. 30.] They were false witnesses. They did not themselves put a difference, nor did they show the people how to put a difference, between the holy and profane, the clean and unclean, according to the directions and distinctions of the law. They did not exclude those from God's courts who were excluded by the law, nor teach the people to observe the difference the law had made between food clean and unclean, between times and places holy and common; but lived at large themselves, and encouraged the people to do so too. [v. 31.] They were false witnesses. They hid their eyes from God's and the unclean, according to the directions and distinctions of the law. They did not exclude those from God's courts who were excluded by the law, nor teach the people to observe the difference the law had made between food clean and unclean, between times and places holy and common; but lived at large themselves, and encouraged the people to do so too. [v. 32.] They were false witnesses. They did not themselves put a difference, nor did they show the people how to put a difference, between the holy and profane, the clean and unclean, according to the directions and distinctions of the law. They did not exclude those from God's courts who were excluded by the law, nor teach the people to observe the difference the law had made between food clean and unclean, between times and places holy and common; but lived at large themselves, and encouraged the people to do so too. [v. 33.] They were false witnesses. They hid their eyes from God's and the unclean, according to the directions and distinctions of the law. They did not exclude those from God's courts who were excluded by the law, nor teach the people to observe the difference the law had made between food clean and unclean, between times and places holy and common; but lived at large themselves, and encouraged the people to do so too.
things run out from them, and evil things pour in upon them; a gap by which God enters to destroy them. (2.) There is a way of standing in the gap, and making up the breach against the judgments of God, by repentance, and prayer, and reformation. Moses stood in the gap when he made intercession for Israel to turn away the wrath of God, Ps. cvi. 23. (3.) When God is coming forth against a sinful people to destroy them, he expects some to intercede for them; but this is not, so much is it his desire and delight to show mercy. If there be but a man that stands in the gap, as Abraham for Sodom, he will discover him, and be well-pleased with him. (4.) It bodes ill to a people when judgments are breaking in upon them, and the spirit of prayer is restrained, so that not one is found, that will either give them a good word, or speak a good word for them. Then it is, as it can be expected but utter ruin? (v. 31.) Therefore have I favoured mine indignation upon them, have given it full scope, that it may come upon them in a full stream; yet, whatever God's wrath inflicts upon a people, it is their own way that is therein recommended upon their heads, and God deals with them no worse, but even much better, than their iniquity deserves.

CHAP. XXIII.

This long chapter (as before, ch. 16. and 20.) is a history of the apostacies of God's people from him, and the agony of the apostates under God's just judgments, both corporal whoredom and adultery. Here the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, the ten tribes and the two, with their capital cities, Samaria and Jerusalem, are considered distinctly. Here is I. The apostacy from God, (v. 1-8.) and their ruin for it, v. 9. 10. II. The apostacy of Judah and Jerusalem from God, (v. 11. 21.) and sentence passed upon them, that they should be destroyed, v. 9, 10. 11. III. The joint wickedness of them both together, (v. 36. 44.) and the joint ruin of them both, v. 45. 49. And all that is written for warning against the sins of idolatry, and confidence in an arm of flesh, and sinful leagues and confederacies with wicked people, (which are the sins here meant by committing whoredom,) is, that others may hear and fear, and not sin after the similitude of the transgressions of Israel and Judah.

1. The word of the Lord came again unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, there were two women, the daughters of one mother; 3. And they committed whoredoms in Egypt; they committed whoredoms in their youth: there were their breasts pressed, and there they bruised the teats of their virginity. 4. And the names of them were Aholah the elder, and Aholibah her sister; and they were mine, and they bare sons and daughters. Thus were their names, Samaria is Aholah, and Jerusalem Aholibah. 5. And Aholah played the harlot when she was mine; and she doted on her lovers, on the Assyrians her neighbours. 6. Which were clothed with blue, captains and rulers, all of them desirable young men, horsemen riding upon horses. 7. Thus she committed her whoredoms with them, with all them that were the chosen men of Assyria, and with all on whom she doted: with all their idols she drifted herself. 8. Neither left she her whoredoms brought from Egypt: for in her youth they lay with her, and they bruised the breasts of her virginity, and poured their whoredom upon her. 9. Wherefore I have delivered her into the hand of her lovers, into the hand of the Assyrians, upon whom she doted. 10. These discovered her nakedness; they took her sons and her daughters, and slew her with the sword; and she became famous among women; for they had executed judgment upon her.

God had often spoken to Ezekiel, and by him to the people, to this effect, but now his word comes again; for God speaks the same thing once, yea, twice, yea, many a time, and all little enough, and too little, for man perceives it not. Note, To convince sinners of the evil of sin, and of their misery and danger by it, and to turn them from it, there is need of every kind of representation; and the more the law of the land, so loath are we to know the worst of ourselves. The sinners that are here to be exposed, are, two women, two kingdoms, sister kingdoms, Israel and Judah, daughters of one mother, having been for a long time but one people. Solomon's kingdom was so large, so populous, that immediately after his death it divided into two. Observe, I. They were women when they were one: (v. 3.) They committed whoredoms in Egypt, for there they were guilty of idolatry, as we read before, ch. xx. 8. The representing of these sins which are most provoking to God and most ruinous to a people, by the sin of whoredom, plainly intimates what an exceeding sinful sin uncleanness is, how offensive, how destructive. Doubtless it is itself one of the worst of sins, for the worst of other sins are compared to it here, and often elsewhere; which should increase our detestation and dread of all manner of fleshly lusts, all appearances of them, and approaches to them, as warring against the soul, intriguing sinners, bewitching them, alienating their minds from God and all that is good, dehauling conscience, rendering them odious in the eyes of the pure and holy God, and drowning them at last in destruction and perdition. 2. Their names when they became two, v. 4. The kingdom of Israel is called the elder sister, because that first made the breach, and separated from the family both of kings and priests that God had appointed; the greater sister, (so the word is,) for ten tribes belonged to that kingdom, and only two to the other. God says of them both, They were mine; that is, they were the seed of Abraham his friend, and of Jacob his chosen; they were in covenant with God, and carried about with them the sign of their circumcision, the seal of the covenant. They were mine; and therefore their apostasy was the highest injustice. It was alienating God's property, it was the basest ingratitude to the best of Benefactors, and a pernicious, treacherous violation of the most sacred engagements. Note, Those who have been, in profession, the people of God, but have revolted from him, have a great deal to answer for more than those who never made any such profession. They were mine; they were espoused to me, and to me they bare sons and daughters; there were many among them that were devoted to God's honour and employed in his service, and were the objects of a particular care of God. But when the children are of the families they are born in. In this parable, Samaria and the kingdom of Israel shall bear the name of Aholah—Her own tabernacle; because the places of worship which that kingdom had, were of their own devising, their own choosing, and the worship itself their own invention; God never owned it, her tabernacle to herself; (so some render it,) she herself had been the minister of it. Jerusalem and the kingdom of Judah bear the name of Aholibah—my tabernacle is in her, because
t'heir temple was the place which God himself had 
chosen to put his name there. He acknowledged it 
to be his, and honoured them with the tokens of his 
presence in it. Note, Of those that stand in rela-
tion to God, and make profession of his name, some 
have greater privileges and advantages than others, 
and as those who have greater, are thereby ren-
dered the more inexcusable if they revolt from God; 
so those who have lesser, will not thereby be ren-
dered inexcusable.

3. The treacherous departure of the kingdom of 
Israel from God; (v. 3.) Aholah played the harlot 
when she was mine. Though the ten tribes had de-
serted the house of David, yet God owned them for 
his still; though Jeroboam, in setting up the golden 
calves, sinned, and made Israel to sin, yet, as long 
as they worshipped the God of Israel only, though 
by images, he did not quite cast them off. But the 
way of sin is downhill. Aholah played the harlot, 
brought in the worship of Baal, (1 Kings xvi. 31.) 
set up that other god, that dung-hill-god, in competi-
tion with Jehovah, (1 Kings xviii. 21.) as a vile 
adulteress does on her lovers, because they are well 
dressed and make a figure, because they are young 
and handsome, (v. 6.) clothed with blue, captains 
and rulers, desirable young men, g丁ented, and that 
pass for men of honour. So she doted on her neigh-
bours, particularly the Assyrians, who had 
extended their conquests near them; she admired 
the pomp of their courts and their military strength, 
and courted alliances with them upon any terms, as 
if their own God were not sufficient to be depended 
on. We find one of the kings of Israel giving a 
thousand talents to the king of Assyria, to engage 
him in his interests, 2 Kings xv. 19. She doted on 
the Assyrians her neighbours, and trusted in, and 
employed in the service of the state, (v. 7.) and on 
all their idols with which she defied herself. Note, 
Whatever creature we dote upon, pay homage to, and 
put a confidence in, we make an idol of that creature; 
and whatever we make an idol of, we defile ourselves with. 
And now again, the conviction looks back as far as the original of 
their nation; Neither left she her whoredoms which 
she brought from Egypt, v. 8. Their being idol-
aters in Egypt was a thing never to be forgotten; 
that they should be in love with Egypt's idols, even 
then when they were continually in fear of Egypt's 
tyrants and taskmasters! But (as some have ob-
erved) therefore, at that time, when Sargon boasted 
of his having walked through the earth as all his 
owers before him, his pretensions, God did not say, 
Hast thou considered my people Israel in Egypt? 
(For they were become idolaters, and were not to 
be boasted of;) but, Hast thou considered my ser-
vant Job in the land of Uz? And this corrupt dis-
position in them, when they were first formed into 
a people, is an emblem of that original corruption 
which is born with us, and is woven into our con-
stitution, as a strong line, running through our 
broads and flesh, like that in the Israelites toward idolatry; it 
was bred in the bone with them, and was charged 
upon them long after, that they left not their 
whoredoms brought from Egypt. It would never be out of 
the flesh, though Egypt had been a house of bondage 
to them; thus the corrupt affections and inclinations 
which we brought into the world with us, we have 
not, nor shall we, out of them; though the onus of 
the iniquity we were born in was source of 
all the calamities which human life is liable to.

4. The destruction of the kingdom of Israel for 
their apostasy from God; (v. 9, 10.) I have deli-
vered her into the hand of her lovers. God first 
justly gave her up to her lust, (Ephraim is joined 
to idols, let him alone,) and then gave her up to her 
lovers. The neighbouring nations, whose idolatries 
she had confounded to, and whose friendship she had 
confided in, and in both had affronted God, are now 
made use of as the instruments of her destruction. 
The Assyrians, on whom she doted, soon spread out 
the nakedness of the land, discovered her blind side, 
on which to attack her, stripped her of all her 
masses and all her defences, and so uncovered her, 
and made her naked and bare; carried her sons and 
dau ght ers into captivity, slew her with the sword, 
and quite destroyed that kingdom, and put an end to it. 
We have the story at large, 2 Kings xvii. 6, 6. 
where the cause of the ruin of that once flourishing 
kingdom by the Assyrians is showed to be their 
forsoaking of the God of Israel, forsaking other gods, 
and walking in the statutes of the heathen; it was 
for this that God was very angry with them, and 
removed them out of his sight, v. 18. And that 
the Assyrians, whom they had been so fond of, 
should be employed in executing judgments upon 
them was very remarkable, and shows how God, in 
a way of righteous judgment, often makes that a 
source to sinners, which they have inordinately set 
their hearts upon. The devil will for ever be a 
tormentor to those inimintent sinners who now 
hearten to him and comply with him as a tempter.

Thus Samaria became famous among women, or 
famous rather; she became a name; (so the word 
is:) not only she came to be the subject of discourse, 
but was much talked of, as the desolations of cities and 
kingships, the enemies of the heathen; the Assyrians, 
which was ruined for her idolatries in terrorum—for warming 
to all people to take heed of doing likewise; as the 
public execution of notorious malefactors makes them 
such a name, such an ill name, as may serve to 
frighten others from those wicked courses which 
have brought them to a miserable and shameful 
end. Deut. xxxi. 21. All Israel shall hear and fear.

10. And when her sister Aholibah saw 
this, she was more corrupt in her inordinate 
love than she, and in her whoredoms more 
than her sister in her whore doms. 12. She 
doted upon the Assyrians her neighbours, 
captains and rulers clothed most gorgeously, 
horsemen riding upon horses, all of them 
desirable young men. 13. Then I saw that 
she was defiled, that they took both one way; 
14. And that she increased her whore doms: 
for when she saw men pourtrayed upon the 
wall, the images of the Chaldeans pour-
trayed with vermi lion, 15. Girded with gir-
dles upon their loins, exceeding in dyed 
attire upon their heads, all of them princes 
to look to, after the manner of the Babyloni-
ans of Chaldea, the land of their nativity: 
16. And, as soon as she saw them with her 
eyes, she doted upon them, and sent mes-
sengers unto them into Chalde a. 
17. And 
the Babylonians came to her into the bed 
of love, and they defiled her with their 
whoredoms; and she was polluted with them, 
and her mind was alienated from them. 
18. So she discovered her whore doms, and 
discovered her nakedness; then my mind 
was alienated from her, like as my mind 
was alienated from her sister. 19. Yet she 
multiplied her whore doms, in calling to 
remembrance the days of her youth, wherein
she had played the harlot in the land of Egypt. 20. For she doted upon their paramours, whose flesh is as the flesh of asses, and whose issue is like the issue of horses. 21. Thus thou callest to remembrance the lewdness of thy youth, in bruising thy teats by the Egyptians for the paps of thy youth.

The prophet Hosea, in his time, observed that the two tribes retained their integrity in a great measure, when the ten tribes had apostatised; (Hos. xi. 12.) Ephraim indeed compasses me about with lies, but Judah yet rules with God, and is faithful with the saints; and this was justly expected from them; (Hos. iv. 15.) To acknowledge the sin of their fathers was a heart, yet let not Judah offend. But this last not long; by some unhappy matches made between the house of David and the house of Ahab, the worship of Baal had been brought into the kingdom of Judah, but had been by the reforming kings worked out again; and at the time of the captivity of the ten tribes, which was in the reign of Hezekiah, things were in a good posture: but it lasted not long; in the very manner of this. When Hezekiah had seen the destruction of the kingdom of Israel, they became more corrupt than Israel had seen, in their inordinate love of idols, v. 11. Instead of being made better by the warning which that destruction gave them, they were made worse by it, as if they were despoised because the Lord had made that breach upon Israel; and for that reason the Lord was here said to stand in awe of him as a jealous God, they therefore grew strange to him, and liked those gods better, that would admit of partners with them. Note, These may justly expect God's judgments upon themselves, who do not take warning by his judgments upon others; who see in others what is the end of sin, and yet continue to make a light matter of it. But it is bad indeed with those who are made worse by that which should make them better, and have their lusts irritated and exasperated by that which was designed to suppress and subdue them. Jerusalem grew worse in her whoredoms than her sister Samaria had been in her whoredoms. This was observed before; (ch. xvi. 51.) Neither has Samaria committed adultery above her, but Jerusalem, that had been a faithful city, became a harlot, Isa. i. 21. She also doted upon the Assyrians, (v. 12.) joined in league with them, joined in worship with them; grew to be in love with their captains and rulers, and cried up them as finer and more accomplished gentlemen than any that ever the land of Israel produced. See how richly, how neatly, they were dressed, c. iii. (not gorgeously: how well they sit a horse, they are horsemens riding on horses; how charmingly they look, all of them desirous young men.) And thus they grew to affect every thing that was foreign, and to despise their own nation; and even the religion of it was mean and homely, and not to be compared with the curiosity and gaiety that was in the heathen temples. This was her downfall, and she fell in league with the Chaldeans. Hezekiah himself was faulty this way, when he was proud of the court which the king of Babylon made to him, and complimented his ambassadors with the sight of all his treasures, Isa. xxxix. 2. And the humour increased; (v. 14.) she doted upon the pictures of the Babylonian captains, (v. 15, 16.) she was enamoured of one with that kingdom, invited them to come and settle in Jerusalem, that they might refine the genius of the Jewish nation, and make it more polite; nay, they sent for patterns of their images, altars, and temples, and made use of them in their worship; thus was she polluted with her whoredoms, (v. 17.) and thereby she discovered her own whoredom, v. 18. her own strong inclination to idolatry. And when she had enough of the Chaldeans, and grew tired of them, and disposed to break her league with them, as Jehoshaph and Zedekiah did, her mind being alienated from them, she counselled the Egyptians, doted upon their paramours, (v. 19.{{--}}) would come into alliance with them, and, to strengthen the alliance, would join with them in their idolatries, and then depend upon them to be their protectors from all other nations; for so wise, so rich, so strong, was the Egyptian nation, and came to such perfection in idolatry, that there is no nation new which they can take such satisfaction in as in Egypt. Thus was God's remembrance the lewdness of their youth, v. 19. (The) They pleased themselves with the remembrance of it. When they began to set their affections upon Egypt, they encouraged themselves to put a confidence in that kingdom, because of the old acquaintance they had with it, as if they still retained the gust and relish of the leeks and onions, they had so long grown on it; and besides, the remembrance of the ship and the horse, that they had learned there, and brought up with them from thence. When they began an acquaintance with Egypt, they remembered how Merrily their fathers worshipped the golden calf, what music and dancing they had at that sport, which they learned in Egypt; and hoped they should now have a fair pretence to come to that again. Thus she multiplied her whoredoms, (v. 20.) they called it God's remembrance, and provoked him to remember it against them. God had said indeed that he would reckon with them for the golden calf, that idol of Egypt; (Exod. xxxii. 34.) but such was his patience, that he seemed to have forgotten it, till they, by their league now with the Egyptians against the Chal- deans, did, as it were, put him in mind of it; and therefore, the day of their visitation came, v. 21. as it was said, visit for that. It is very observable how this adulteress changes her lovers; she dotes first on the Assyrians, then she thought the Chaldeans finer, and courted them; after awhile her mind was alienated from them, and she thought the Egyptians more powerful, (v. 26.) and she must contract an intimacy with them; which shows the folly, (v. 27.) How fleshly lusts, when they are indulged, she.r, 21.] how they grow fainthearted and fickle, are soon satisfied, but never satisfied, they must have variety; and what is loved one day is loathed the next. Unites adulterium matrimonioc vacant, si Seneca observet. (2.) Of idolatry. Those who think one God too little, will not think a hundred sufficient, but will still be for trying more, as finding all insufficient. F3. Of fleshly lusts, when they are indulged, they go from one to another, and be disappointed in them all, and can never rest till we have made the God of Israel our Help. 2. The faithful God justly gives a bill of divorce to this now faithless city, that is become a harlot. His jealousy soon discovered her lewdness; (v. 13.) I saw that she was defiled, that she was debauched; she must be divested, as in the covenant, that rests both took one way, and that Jerusalem grew worse than Samaria; for if we stretch out our hand to a strange god, shall not God search this out? Ne
doubt he shall, and when he has found it, can he be pleased with it? No, (v. 18.) Then my mind was alienated from her, as it was from her sister. How could the pure and holy God any longer take delight in such a Lewed generation? Note, Sin alienates God’s mind from the sinner; and, justly, for it is the alienation of the sinner’s mind from God, but no, and a thousand ways, to those from whom God’s mind is alienated; for whom he turns from he will turn against.

22. Therefore, O Aholibah, thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will raise up thy lovers against thee, from whom thy mind is alienated, and I will bring them against thee on every side; 23. The Babylonians, and all the Chaldeans, Pekod, and Shoa, and Koat, and all the Assyrians with them: all of them desirable young men, captains and rulers, great lords and renowned, all of them riding upon horses. 24. And they shall come against thee with chariots, wagons, and wheels, and with an assembly of people, which shall set against thee buckler, and shield, and helmet, round about: and I will set judgment before them, and they shall judge thee according to their judgments. 25. And I will set my jealousy against thee, and they shall deal furiously with thee: they shall take away thy nose and thine ears; and thy remnant shall fall by the sword: they shall take thy sons and thy daughters; and thy residue shall be devoured by the fire. 26. They shall also strip thee out of thy clothes, and take away thy fair jewels. 27. Thus will I make thy lewdness to cease from thee, and thy whoredom brought from the land of Egypt: so that thou shalt not lift up thine eyes unto them, nor remember Egypt any more. 28. For thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will deliver thee into the hand of them whom thou hatest, into the hand of them from whom thy mind is alienated: 29. And they shall deal with thee hatefully, and shall take away all thy labour, and shall leave thee naked and bare; and the nakedness of thy whoredoms shall be discovered, both thy lewdness and thy whoredoms. 30. I will do these things unto thee, because thou hast gone a whoring after the heathen, and because thou art polluted with their idols. 31. Thou hast walked in the way of thy sister; therefore will I give her cup into thy hand. 32. Thus saith the Lord God, Thou shalt drink of thy sister’s cup deep and large: thou shalt be laughed to scorn and had in derision; it containeth much. 33. Thou shalt be filled with drunkenness and sorrow, with the cup of astonishment and desolation, with the cup of thy sister Samaria. 34. Thou shalt even drink it, and suck it out, and thou shalt break the sherd thereof, and pluck off thine own breasts: for I have spoken it, saith the Lord God. 35. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Because thou hast forgotten me, and cast me behind thy back, therefore bear thou also thy lewdness and thy whoredoms.

Jerusalem stands indicted by the name of Aholibah for that she, as a false traitor to her sovereign Lord the God of heaven, not having his fear before her eyes, but moved by the instigation of the devil, had revolted from her allegiance to him, had compassed and imagined to shake off his government, had kept up a correspondence, and shown her confederacy, with his enemies, and the pretenders to all his contempt of his crown and dignity: to this indictment she has pleaded, Not guilty; I am not polluted, I have not gone after Baalim. But it is found against her by the notorious evidence of the fact, and she stands convicted of it, nor has any thing material to offer why judgment should not be given, and execrations and awful judgments pronounced. In these verses, therefore, we have the sentence.

1. Her old confederates must be her executioners; and those whom she had courted to be her leaders in sin, are now to be employed as instruments of her punishment; (v. 22.) “I will raise up thy lovers against thee; the Chaldeans, whom formerly thou didst so much admire, and covert an acquaintance with, from whom thy mind is since alienated, and with whom thou hast perjured thy broken covenant.” They are called thy lovers, (v. 22.) and yet, (v. 28.) them whom thou hatest. Note, It is common for sinful love soon to turn into hatred; as Amnon’s to Tamar. Those of headstrong and unreasonable passions are often very hot against these persons and things, that a little before they were as hot for. Feel turn to extremes; nay, and wise men may see cause to change their sentiments. And therefore as we should rejoice and weep as if we rejoiced not and wept not; so we should love and hate as if we loved not and hated not. Tita ana tangam osurus—Love as one who may have cause to feel aversion.

2. The execution to be done upon her is very terrible. The Babylonians shall come against her on every side; (v. 22.) those three great empires that constituted the Chaldean army, (v. 23.) all of them great lords and renowned, whose pomp and grandeur and splendid appearance made them look the more amiable, when they came as friends to protect and patronise Jerusalem, but the more formidable when they came to chastise its treachery, and aimed at no less than its ruin. (1.) They shall come with a great deal of military force, (v. 24.) with chariots and wagons, furnished with all necessary provisions for a camp, with arms and ammunition, bag and baggage, with a vast army, and well armed. (2.) They shall have justice on their sides: “I will set judgment before them;” (they shall have right with them as well as might: for the king of Babylon had just cause to make war upon the king of Judah, because he had broken his league with him; “and therefore they shall judge thee, not only according to God’s judgments, as the instruments of his justice, to punish thee for the indignities done to him, but according to their judgments, according to the law of nations, to punish thee for thy pernicious dealings with them.”) They shall prosecute the war with a great deal of fury and resentment; it being a matter of course, they shall deal with thee hatefully, v. 29. This will make the execution the more severe, that their words will be dipped in poison. Thou hatest them,
and they shall deal hatefully with thee; those that hate, will be hated, and hatefully dealt with. (4.) God himself will lead them on, and this anger shall be a power of God. (5.) They shall deal hateful-ly against thee, that shall kindle this fire, and then they shall deal furiously with thee. If men deal ever so hatefully, ever so furiously, with us, if we have God on our side, we need not fear them, they can do us no real hurt. But if men deal furiously with us, and God set his jealousy against us too, what will become of us?

The particulars of the sentence here passed upon this notorious adulteress are, [1.] That all she has shall be seized on. The clothes and the fair jewels, with which she had endeavoured to recommend herself to her lovers, these she shall be stripped of. (v. 26.) All those things that were the ornaments of their state, shall be taken away; "They shall take away all thy labour, all that thou hast gotten by thy labour, and shall leave thee naked and bare," (v. 29.) Both city and country shall be impoverished, and all the wealth of both swept away. [2.] That her children should go into captivity; "They shall take thy sons and thy daughters, and make slaves of them, (v. 25.) for they are children of whoredoms, unworthy the dignities and privileges of Israelites," H. s. ii. 4. [3.] That she shall be stigmatized and deformed; "They shall take away thy nose and thy lips, and mark thee with the mark of a leper, and make thee for ever odious," (v. 25.) This intimates the many cruelties of the Chaldean soldiers toward the Jews that fell into their hands; whom, it is probable, they used barbarously. Some will have this to be understood figuratively; and by the nose they think is meant the kingdom dignity, and by the ears that of the priesthood. [4.] That she shall be exposed to shame; "Thy lewdness and thy whoredoms shall be discovered;" (v. 29.) as when a malefactor is punished, all his crimes are ripped up, and repeated to his disgrace; what was secret then comes to light, and what was done long since is then called to mind. [5.] That she shall be quite cut off and ruined; "The remnant of thy people that have escaped the famine and pestilence, shall fall by the sword; and the residue of thy houses that have not been destroyed, shall go into captivity by fire," (v. 35.) And this shall be the end of Jerusalem.

3. Because she has trod in the steps of Samaria's sins, she must expect no other than Samaria's fate. It is common, in giving judgment, to have an eye to precedents; so has God, in passing this sentence on Jerusalem; (v. 31, &c.) "Thou hast walked in the way of thy sister, notwithstanding the warning thou hast had given thee, by the fatal consequences of her wickedness; and therefore I will give her cup, her portion of miseries, into thy hand, the cup of the Lord's fury, which will be to thee a cup of trembling." Now, (1.) This cup is said to be deep and large, and to contain much, (v. 32.) abundance of God's wrath, and abundance of miseries, (v. 26) more than they could bear, (v. 27.) which that which we read of, Jer. xxv. 15, 16. The cup of divine vengeance holds a great deal, and so they will find, into whose hand it shall be put. (2.) They shall be made to drink the very dregs of this cup, as the wicked are said to do; (Ps. lxxxv. 8.) "Thou shalt drink it and suck it out, not because it is pleasant, but because it is forced upon thee; (v. 34.) thou shalt drink of thine own bowls, for indignation at the extreme bitterness of this cup, being full of the fury of the Lord," (Isa. li. 20.) as men in great anguish tear their hair, and throw every thing from them. Finding there is no remedy, but it must be drank, (for I have spoken it, saith the Lord God,) thou shalt have no manner of patience in the drinking of it." (3.) They shall be intoxicated by it, made sick, and be at their ways' end, as men in drink are, staggering, and stumbling, and ready to fall; (v. 33.) "Thou shalt be drunken with the cup of the Lord's fury." Note, Drunkenness has sorrow attending it, to such a degree, that the utmost confusion and astonishment are here represented by it. Who would think that that which is such a force upon nature, such a scandal to it, which deprives men of their reason, disorders them to the last degree, and is therefore expressive of the greatest murther, could it be said, and should it ever be said, with many a beloved sin; that they should damn their own souls, to distemper their own bodies? Who has wo and sorrow like them? Prov. xxiii. 29. (4.) Being so intoxicated, they shall become as drunkards deserve to be, a laughing-stock to all about them; (v. 32.) Thou shalt be laughed to scorn, and had in derision, as acting riddiculously in every thing thou goest about. When God is about to ruin a people, he makes their judges fools, and pours contempt on their princes, Job xlii. 17, 21.

4. In all this God will be justified, and by all this they will be reformed; and so the issue even of this will be God's glory and their good. (1.) They have been bad, very bad, and that justifies God in all that is brought upon them; (v. 30.) I will do these things unto thee, because thou hast gone a whoring after the gods of thy fathers, and hast not feared me, and cast me behind thy back. Note, Forgetfulness of God, and a contempt of him, of his eye upon us, and authority over us, are at the bottom of all our treacherous and adulterous departures from him. Therefore men wander after idols, because they forget God, and their obligations to him; nor could they look with so much desire and delight upon the sins of sin, if they did not first cast God behind their back, as not worthy to be regarded. And those who put such an affront upon God, how can they think but that it should turn upon themselves at last? Therefore hear thou also thy lewdness and thy whoredoms; that is, thou shalt suffer the punishment of it, and then alone must bear the blame. Men need no more to sink them than the weight of their own sins; and they who will not bear the punishment of their own sins, must needs bear them. (2.) They shall be better, much better, and this fire, though consuming to many, shall be refining to a remnant; (v. 27.) Thus will I make thy lewdness to cease from thee. The judgments which were brought upon them by their sins, parted between them and their sins, and taught them at length to say, What have we to do any more with idols? Observe, [1.] How iniquitous the course was; Thy whoredoms were brought from the land of Egypt. Their disposition to idolatry was early and innate, their practice of it was ancient, and had gained a sort of prescription by long usage. [2.] How complete the cure was, notwithstanding; "Though it has taken root, yet it shall be made to cease, so that thou shalt not so much as lift up thine eyes unto its idols; thou shalt not think of them, with pleasure any more." They shall avoid the occasions of this sin, for they shall not so much as look upon an idol, lest their hearts should unawares walk after their eyes. And they shall abandon all inclinations to it; They shall not remember Egypt, they shall not retain any of that affection for idols, which they had from the very infancy of their na- ture, in their bondage in Egypt, and lost it through the grace of God, in their captivity in Babylon, which this was the blessed fruit of, even the taking away of sin; of that sin; so that whereas, before the captivity, no nation (all things considered) was more importunately bent upon idols and idolatry than they were, after that captivity, no nation was more
v; vehemently set against idols and idolatry than they were; insomuch that at this day the image-worship which is practised in the church of Rome confirms the Jews, as much as any thing, in their prejudices against the Christian religion.

36. The Lord said moreover unto me, Son of man, wilt thou judge Aholah and Aholiah? yea, declare unto them their abominations; 37. That they have committed adultery, and blood is in their hands, and with their idols have they committed adultery; and have also caused their sons, whom they bare unto me, to pass for them through the fire, to devour them. 38. Moreover, this they have done unto me: they have defiled my sanctuary in the same day, and have profaned my sabbaths. 39. For when they had slain their children to their idols, then they came the same day into my sanctuary to profane it; and, lo, thus have they done in the midst of my house. 40. And furthermore, that ye have sent for men to come from far, unto whom a messenger was sent; and, lo, they came; for whom thou didst wash thyself, paintedst thine eyes, and deckedst thyself with ornaments, 41. And satest upon a stately bed, and a table prepared before it, whereupon thou hast set mine incense and mine oil. 42. And a voice of a multitude being at ease was with her: and with the men of the common sort were brought Sabeans from the wilderness, which put bracelets upon their hands, and beautiful crowns upon their heads. 43. Then said I unto her that was old in adulteries, Will they now commit whoredoms with her, and she with them? 44. Yet they went in unto her, as they go in unto a woman that playeth the harlot; so went they in unto Aholah and unto Aholibah, the lewd women. 45. And the righteous men, they shall judge them after the manner of the adulteresses, and after the manner of women that shed blood; because they are adulteresses, and blood is in their hands. 46. For thus saith the Lord God, I will bring up a company upon them, and will give them to be removed and spoiled. 47. And the company shall stone them with stones, and despatch them with their swords; they shall slay their sons and their daughters, and burn up their houses with fire. 48. Thus will I cause lewdness to cease out of the land, that all women may be taught not to do after your lewdness. 49. And they shall recompense your lewdness upon you, and ye shall bear the sins of your idols: and ye shall know that I am the Lord God.

After the ten tribes were carried into captivity, and that kingdom was made quite desolate, the remains of it by degrees incorporated with the kingdom of Judah, and gained a settlement (many of them) in Jerusalem; so that the two sisters were in effect become one again: and therefore, in these verses, the prophet takes those to task jointly, who were thus convinced; "Wilt thou judge Aholah and Aholibah together?" v. 36. Wilt thou go about to excuse them? Thou seest the matter is so bad as not to bear an excuse." Or, rather, "They shall now be employed, in God's name, to judge them, ch. xx. 4. 'The matter is rather worse than better since the union.'

1. Let them be made to see the sins they are guilty of; declare unto them openly and boldly their abominations.

2. They have been guilty of gross idolatry here called adultery; With their idols they have committed adultery, (v. 37,) have broken their marriage-covenant with God; have littered after the gratifications of a carnal, sensual mind in the worship of God. This is the first and worst of the abominations he is to charge them with.

3. They have committed the most barbarous murders in sacrificing their children to Moloch, a sin so unnatural, that they deserve to bear of pen on all occasions; Blood is in their hands, innocent blood, the blood of their own children, which they have caused to pass through the fire, (v. 37,) not that they might be dedicated to the idols, but that they might be devoured; a sign that they loved their idols better than that which was nearest to them in the world.

3. They have profaned the sacred things with which God had dignified and distinguished them; this they have done unto me, this indignity, this injury, v. 38. Every contempt put upon that which is holy, reflects upon him who is the Fountaii of holiness, and from a relation to whom whatever is called holy has its denomination. God had set up his sanctuary among them, but they defiled it, by making it a house of merchandise, a den of thieves; nay, and much worse, there they set up their idols, and worshipped them, and there they shed the blood of God's prophets. God had revealed to them his holy sabbaths, but they profaned them, by doing all manner of servile work therein, or perhaps by sports and recreations on that day, not only practised, but encouraged by authority. They defiled the sanctuary and the sabbath-day, that they profaned the sabbath. To defile the sanctuary was bad enough on any day, but to do it on the sabbath-day was an aggravation. We commonly say, the better day, the better deed; but here, the better day, the worse deed. God takes notice of their circumstances of sin, which add to the guilt. He shows (v. 39,) what was their profanation, both of the sanctuary and of the sabbath. They slew their children, and sacrificed them to their idols, to the great dishonour both of God and of the human nature; and then came, the same day, their hands impurified with the blood of their children, and their clothes stained with it, to attend in God's sanctuary; not to ask pardon for what they had done, but to present themselves before him, as their professors, and avow their crimes, expecting acceptance with him, notwithstanding these villanies which they were guilty of; as if God either did not know their wickedness, or did not hate it. Thus they profaned the sanctuary, as if that were a protection to the worst of malefactors; and thus they did in the midst of his house. Note, It is a profanation of God's solemn ordinances, when those that are grossly and openly profane and vilify, impudently and inordinately so intrude upon the services and privileges of them. Give not that which is holy unto dogs, Friend, how camest thou in hither?
4. They have courted foreign alliances, being proud of them, and repised a confidence in them. This also is represented by the sin of adultery, for it was a departure from God, not only to whom alone they ought to pay their homage, and their idols, but in whom alone they ought to put their trust, and not in creatures. Israel was a peculiar people, must dwell alone, and not be reckoned among the nations; and they profane their crown, and by their honour in the dust, when they covet to be like them, or in league with them. But this they have now done; they have entered into strict alliances with the Assyrians, Chaldeans, and Egyptians, the most renounced and potent kingdoms that time; but they scorned alliances with the petty kingdoms and states that lay near them, which yet might have been of more real service to them. Note, Afflicting a acquaintance and correspondence with great people has often been a snare to good people. Let us see how Jerusalem courts her high allies, thinking thereby to make herself considerable.

(1.) She privately requested that a public embassy might be sent to her; (v. 40.) You sent a messenger for men to come from far. It seems, then, that the neighbours had no desire to come into a confederacy with Jerusalem, but she thrust herself upon them, and sent underhand to desire them to court her: and, lo, they came. The wisest and best of men, says an old maxim, cannot be persuaded to converse with profane and wicked people; but it is no sign either of wisdom or goodness to covet an intimacy with such, and to court it.

(2.) Great preparation is made for the reception of these foreign ministers, for their public entry and public audience; which is compared to the pains that an adulteress takes to make herself look handsome. Jezebel-like, thou hastointed thy face, and deckedst thyself with ornaments, and princes made themselves new clothes, fitted up the rooms of state, beautified the furniture, and made it look fresh. Thou sattest upon a stately bed, (v. 41.) a stately throne; a table was prepared, whereon thou hast set wine oil and wine incense. This was either, [1.] A feast for the ambassadors, a public treat, agreeable to the other preparations. This was a solemnity, a sense of the occasion, and all to anoint their heads. Or, [2.] An altar already furnished for the ambassadors use in the worship of their idols; let them know that the Israelites were not so strait-laced but that they could allow foreigners the free exercise of their religion among them, and furnish them with chapels, yea, and complimented them so far as to join with them in their devotions; though the law of their God was against it, yet they could easily dispense with themselves to oblige a friend. The oil and incense God calls his, not only because they were the gift of his providence, but because they should have been offered at his altar; which was an aggravation of their sin in serving idols and idolaters with them. See Hos. ii. 8.

(3.) There was great joy at their coming, as if it were the occasion of a blessing that had happened to them before; (v. 42.) A voice of a multitude being at ease was with her. The people were very easy, for they thought themselves very safe and happy now that they had such powerful allies; and therefore attended the ambassadors with loud huzzas and acclamations of joy. A great confluence of people there was to the court upon this occasion. The men of the common sort were there to grace the solemnity, and to increase the crowd, and with them were brought Sabians from the wilderness. The margin reads it drunkards from the wilderness, that would drink healths to the prosperity of this grand alliance, and force them upon others, and be most noisy in shouting upon this occasion. Who ever they were, in honour of the ambassadors, they put bracelets upon their hands, and beautiful crowns upon their heads, which made the cavalcade appear very splendid.

(4.) God by his prophets warned them against making their former alliances with foreign states, (v. 43.) Then said I unto her that was old in adulteries, that from the first was fond of leagues with heathenish nations, (Judg. iii. 6.) and afterward of making alliances with their kingdoms; and, though often disappointed therein, would never be dissuaded from it; (This was the adultery she was old in.) I said, Will they be commissaries where she is? Shall I suffer them? Surely experience and observation will by this time have convinced both them and her, that an alliance between the nation of the Jews and a heathen nation can never be for the advantage of either. They are iron and clay that will not mix, nor will God bless it, or smile upon it. But, it seems, her being old in these adulteries, instead of weaning her from them, as one would expect, does but make her the more impudent and insolent in them; for though she was thus admonished of the folly of it, yet they went in unto her, v. 44. A bargain was soon clapped up, and a league made, first with this, and then with the other, foreign state. Samaria did so; Jerusalem did so, like lewd women. They could not rest satisfied in the embraces of God's laws and covenant, and the assurance of protection he gave them; they could not think him become secure enough. But they must by treaties and leagues, politic ones (they thought) and well concerted, throw themselves into the arms of foreign princes, and put their interests under their protection. Note, Those hearts go a whoring from God, that take a complacency in the pomp of the world, and put a confidence in its wealth, and in an arm of flesh, as a foreign armour is. II. Let them be made to foresee the judgments that are coming upon them for these sins; (v. 45.) The righteous men, they shall judge them. Some make the instruments of their destruction to be the righteous men that shall judge them. The Assyrians that destroyed Samaria, the Chaldeans that destroyed Jerusalem, were comparatively righteous, and were filled with a sense of the insufficiency of national religion; and, justly presented the treachery of the Jewish nation; however, they executed God's judgments, which, we are sure, are all righteous. Others understand it of the prophets, whose office it was, in God's name, to judge them, and pass sentence upon them. Or, we may take it as an appeal to all righteous men, to all that have a sense of equity; they shall judge concerning these cities, and agree in their verdict, that, from hence as they have been notoriously guilty of adultery and murder, and the guilt is national, therefore they ought to suffer the pains and penalties which by law are inflicted upon women in their personal capacity, that shed blood, and are adulteresses. Righteous men will say, Why should bloody filthy cities escape any better than bloody filthy persons? Judge, I pray thee, Isa. v. 2.

This judgment being given by the righteous men, the righteous God will award execution. See here, I. What the execution will be, v. 46, 47. The same as before, v. 23, &c. God will bring a company of enemies upon them, who shall be made to serve his holy purposes, even then when they are serving their own sinful appetites and passions. These enemies shall easily prevail, for God will give them into their hands to be removed and spoiled; this company shall stone them with stones as male factors; shall single them out, and despatch them with their swords; and, as was sometimes done in severe executions, (witness of Achan,) they
shall slay their children, and burn their houses. 2. What will be the effects of it? (1.) Thus they shall suffer for their sins; Their lewdness shall be encompassed upon them; (v. 49.) and they shall bear the sins of their idols, v. 35, 39. Thus God will assert the honour of his broken law and injured government, and let the world know what a just and jealous God he is. (2.) Thus they shall be taken from the midst of their envying; I will cause lewdness to cease out of the land, v. 27, 48. The destruction of God's city, like the death of God's saints, shall do that for them which ordinances and providences before could not do, it shall quite take away their sin; so that Jerusalem shall rise out of its ashes a new lump, as gold comes out of the furnace, purified from its dross. (3.) Thus the wicked and nations have2) having given them to keep themselves from idols; that all women may be taught not to do after your lewdness. This is the end of the punishment of malefactors, that they may be made examples to others, who will see and fear. Smite the scoffer, and the simple will beware. The judgments of God upon some are designed to teach others, and happy they who receive instruction from their parents, to turn from the steps of sinners, lest they be taken in their snare; those who would be taught this, must know God is the Lord; (v. 49.) that he is the Governor of the world, a God that judges in the earth, and with whom there is no respect of persons.

CHAP. XXIV.

Here are two sermons, in this chapter, preached on a particular occasion, and they are both from mount Sinai, the mount of terror, both from mount Ebal, the mount of curses; both speak the approaching fate of Jerusalem.

The occasion of them was the king of Babylon's laying siege to Jerusalem, and the design of them is to show that in the day of that siege, he should not be not only master of the place, but destroyer of it. 1. By the sign of flesh boiling in a pot over the fire, are showed the mines that Jerusalem should suffer during the siege, and justly, for her filthiness, v. 1. 14. II. By the sign of Ezekiel's not mourning for the death of his wife, is showed that the calamities coming upon Jerusalem were too great to be lamented, so great that they should sink down under them into a silent despair, v. 15. 27.

1. AGAIN, in the ninth year, in the tenth month, the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, write the name of the day, even of this same day; the king of Babylon set himself against Jerusalem this same day, 3. And utter a parable unto the rebellious house, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God, Set on a pot, set it on, and also pour water into it; 4. Gather the pieces thereof into it, even every good piece, the thigh, and the shoulder; fill it with the choice bones, 5. Take the choice of the flock, and burn also the bones under it, and make it boil well, and let them seethe the bones of it therein, 6. Wherefore thus saith the Lord God, Wo to the bloody city, to the pot whose scum is therein, and whose scum is not gone out of it! bring it out piece by piece; let no lot fall upon it, 7. For her blood is in the midst of her; she set it upon the top of a rock; she poured it not upon the ground to cover it with dust, 8. That it might cause fury to come up to take vengeance; I have set her blood upon the top of a rock, that it should not be covered. 9. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Wo to the bloody city! I will even make the pile for fire great, 10. Heap on wood, kindle the fire, consume the flesh, and space it well, and let the bones be burnt. 11. Then set it empty upon the coals thereof, that the brass of it may be hot, and may burn, and that the filthiness of it may be molten in it, that the scum of it may be consumed. 12. She hath wearied herself with lies, and her great scum went not forth out of her; her scum shall be in the fire. 13. In thy filthiness is lewdness: because I have purged thee, and thou wast not purged, thou shalt not be purged from thy filthines any more, till I have caused my fury to rest upon thee, 14. I the Lord have spoken it; it shall come to pass, and I will do it; I will not go back, neither will I spare, neither will I repent: according to thy ways, and according to thy doings, shall they judge thee, saith the Lord God.

We have here, 1. The notice God gives to Ezekiel in Babylon of Nebuchadnezzar's laying siege to Jerusalem, just at the time when he was doing it; (v. 2.) "Son of man, take notice, the king of Babylon, who is new abroad with his army, thou knowest not where, set forth against Jerusalem this same day," It was many miles, it was many days' journey, from Jerusalem to Babylon; perhaps the last intelligence they had from the army was, that the design was upon Rabbath of the children of Ammon, and that the campaign was to be opened with the siege of that city. But God knew, and could tell the prophet. This day, at this time, Jerusalem is invested, and the Chaldean army set down before it. Note, At all times, so all places, even the most remote, are present with God, and under his view. He tells it the prophet, that the prophet might tell it the people, that so, when it proved to be punctually true, as they would find by the public intelligence in a little time, it might be a confirmation of the prophet's mission, and they might infer that, since he spoke right of the news, he was so in his predictions, for he owed both to the same correspondence he had with Heaven.

II. The notice which he orders him to take of it. He must enter it in his book, memorandum, that in the ninth year of Jechonias's captivity, (for thence Ezekiel dated, ch. i. 2, which was also the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign, for he began to reign when Jehoiakim was carried off;) in the tenth month, on the tenth day of the month, the king of Babylon laid siege to Jerusalem; and the date here agrees exactly with the date in the history, 2 Kings xxv. 1. See how God reveals things to his servants the prophets, especially these things which serve to confirm their word, and so to confirm their own faith. Note, It is good to keep an exact account of the events of the times; for sometimes, though not always, his times contribute to the manifestation of God's glory in so much the more in them, and the explaining and confirming of scripture-prophecies. Known unto God are all his works.

III. The notice which he orders him to give to the people thereof, the purport of which is, that the siege of Jerusalem, now begun, will infallibly end in the ruin of it. This he must say to the rebellious house, to those of them that were in Babylon, to be by them communicated to those that were...
yet in their own land. A rebellious house will soon be a ruinous house.

1. He must show them this by a sign; for that stupid people needed to be taught as children are. The comparison made use of is that of a boiling pot. This agrees with Jeremiah's vision many years before when he first began to be a prophet, and, probably, was designed to put them in mind of the fulfillment of his word. (Jer. xxviii. 17.) "A weeping pot, with the face toward the north, and the explanation of it, (v. 15.) makes it signify the besieging of Jerusalem by the northern nations. And as this comparison is intended to confirm Jeremiah's vision, so also to confront the vain confidence of the princes of Jerusalem, who had said, (ch. xi. 3.) This city is the caldron, and we are the flesh; meaning, With justice and anger have we been surrounded with walls of brass." "Well," says God, "it shall be so, you shall be boiled in Jerusalem, as the flesh in the caldron, boiled to pieces; let the pot be set on with water in it; (v. 4.) let it be filled with the flesh of the choice of the flock, (v. 5.) with the choice pieces, (v. 4.) and the marrow-bones, and let the other bones serve for fuel, that, one way or other, all those who shall enter in the house shall be made use of. A fire of bones, though it be a slow fire, (for the siege was to be long,) is yet a sure and lasting fire; such was God's wrath against them, and not like the cracking of thorns under a pot, which has noise and blazes, but no intense heat. They that from all parts of the country fled into Jerusalem for safety, would be sadly disappointed, when the siege laid to it would soon make the place too hot for them; and yet there was no getting out of it, but they must be forced to abide by it, as the flesh in a boiling pot.

2. He must give them a comment upon this sign. It is to be construed as a wo to the bloody city, v. 6. And again, (v. 9.) being bloody, let it go to pot, to be boiled, it is the fittest place for it. Let us here see

(1.) What is the course God takes with it. Jerusalem, during the siege, is like a pot boiling over the fire, all in a heat, all in a hurry. [1.] Care is taken to keep a good fire under the pot, which signifies the closeness of the siege, and the many vigorous attacks made upon the city by the besiegers, and especially the continued wrath of God burning against them; (v. 9.) I will make the fire for great. Commission is given to the Chaldeans, (v. 10.) to heap on wood, and kindle the fire; to make Jerusalem more and more hot to the inhabitants. Note, The fire which God kindles for the consuming of impudent sinners, shall never abate, much less go out, for want of fuel. Tophet has fire and much wood; Isa. xxx. 33. [2.] The meat, as it is boiled, is taken out, and given to the Chaldeans for them to feast upon. "Consume the flesh," let it be thoroughly boiled over, that it be well, and make it savoury, for those who will feed sweetly upon it; the bones be burnt; (either the bones under the pot, let them be consumed with the other fuel, or, as some think, the bones in the pot;) "let it boil so furiously, that not only the flesh may be sodden, but even the bones softened; let all the inhabitants of Jerusalem be, by sickness, sword, and famine, burnt, a boiler to rage; and the misery of this, (v. 6.) "Bring it out piece by piece; let every man be delivered into the enemy's hand, to be either put to the sword, or made a prisoner. Let them be an easy prey to them, and let the Chaldeans fall upon them as eagerly as a hungry man does upon a good dish of meat, when it is set before him. Let no lot fall upon it; every piece in the pot shall be fetched out, anddevoured, first or last, and therefore it is no matter for casting lots which shall be fetched out first. It was a very severe military execution, when David measured Moab with two lines to put to death, and one full line to keep alive. 2. Som. vii. 2. But here is no line, no lot of mercy, made use of; all goes one way, and that is to destruction. [3.] When all the broth is boiled away, the pot is set empty upon the coals, that it may burn too, which signifies the setting of the city on fire, v. 11. The scum of the pot is got into the fire, (v. 6.) and is poured out into it, which is to make it clean by washing or scouring it, and therefore it must be done by fire; so let the filthiness be burnt out of it, or, rather, molten in it, and burnt with it. Let the vipers and their nest be consumed together.

(2.) What is the quarrel God has with it. He would not take these severe methods with Jerusalem, but that he is provoked to it; she deserves to be thus dealt with for,

[1.] It is a bloody city; (v. 7, 8.) Her blood is in the midst of her. Many a barbarous murder has been committed in the very heart of the city; say, and they have a disposition to cruelty in their hearts; they inwardly delight in bloodshed, and so it is in the midst of them. Nay, they commit their murder on their own countrymen, and to a man avowedly, and openly; and do not, as some were wont to do, privately; they openly avow them, in defiance of the justice both of God and man. She did not pour out the blood she shed upon the ground, to cover it with dust, as being ashamed of the sin, or afraid of the punishment. She did not look upon it as a filthy thing, proper to be concealed, (Dent. xxviii. 13.) much less dangerous Nay, she poured out the innocent blood she shed, after a rocc, to escape the vengeance of the Lord, and refuse to be consumed by the fire of vengeance. Nay, she poured out the innocent blood shed, after a rock, to escape the vengeance of the Lord, and refuse to be consumed by the fire of vengeance. They shed innocent blood, under colour of justice; so that they gloried in it, as if they had done God and the country good service, so put it, as it were, on the top of a rock; or, it may refer to the sacrificing of their children on their high places, perhaps on the top of rocks. Now thus they caused fear to come upon, and take vengeance, v. 8. It could not be avoided, but that God must in anger visit these things, his soul must be avenged on such a nation as this. If such impudent murders as these, that even dare divine vengeance, go unpunished, it will be said that God has forsaken the earth. It is absolutely necessary that such a bloody city as this should have blood given her to drink, for she is worthy, for the vindicating of the honour of divine justice. And the crime being so public and notorious, it is fit that the punishment should be so too; I have set her blood on the top of a rock. Jerusalem was to be made an example, and therefore was made a spectacle, to the world; God dealt with her according to the law of retaliation. It is fit that those who sin before all, should be rebuked before all; and that their reputation should not be consulted by the conscience of their punishment, lest they should be so impudent as not to desire the concealment of their sin.

[2.] It is a filthy city. Great notice is taken, in this explanation of the comparison, of the scum of this pot, which signifies the sin of Jerusalem, working up and appearing when the judgments of God were upon her. It is the pot below scum is therein, (v. 11.) and that was not out of her. The scum, which went not forth out of her, (v. 12.) that stuck to the pot when all was boiled away, and was molten in it; (v. 11.) some of this runs over into the fire, (v. 12.) inflames that, and makes it burn the more furiously, but it shall all be consumed at last, v. 11. When the hand of God was gone out against them, instead of humbling themselves under it, repenting and reforming, and according the punishment of their iniquity, they grew more impudent and outrageous in sin; quarreled with God, persecuted his prophets, were fierce to one another, enraged to the last de-
grec against the Chaldeans, snared at the stone, gnawed their chain, and were like a wild bull in a net. This was their scour; in their distress they trespassed yet more against the Lord; like that king Ahaz, 2 Chron. xxviii. 22. There is little hope of those who are made worse by that which should make them better; whose corruptions are excised and exasperated by those rebukes both of the word and of the providence of God, whom they desired for the suppressing and subduing of them; or of those whose scour boiled up once in convictions, and confessions of sin, as if it would be taken off by reformation, but afterward returned again in a revolt from their good overtures; and the heart that seemed softened is hardened again.

This was Jerusalem's case. She has sweared with lies, wearied her God with purposes and promises of amendment, which she never stood to, sweared herself with her carnal confidences, which have all deceived her, v. 12. Note, Those that follow lying vanities, weary themselves with the pursuit. Now see her doom, v. 13, 14. Because she is incurably wicked, she is abandoned to ruin, without remedy. First, Methods and means of reformation have been sufficiently tried; they will do no good; nor will they be of any benefit, the intention of them has not been answered. No; it is said to think how many there are on whom ordinances and provisions are all lost. Secondly, It is therefore resolved that no more such methods shall be used; Thou shalt not be purged from thy filthiness any more. The fire shall no longer be a refining fire, but a consuming fire, and therefore shall not be mitigated and shortened, as it has been, but shall be continued in extremity, till it has done its destroying work. Note, Those that will not be healed, are justly given up, and their case adjudged desperate. There is a day coming when it will be said, He that is filthy, let him be filthy still. Thirdly, Nothing remains then but to bring them to utter ruin; I will cause my fury to rest upon them, fore and after. See what is foretold of the latter Jews, that wrath is come upon them to the uttermost, 1 Thess. ii. 16. They deserve it; According to thy doings they shall judge thee, v. 14. And God will do it. The sentence is bound on with repeated ratifications, that they might be awakened to see how certain their ruin was; "I the Lord have spoken it, who am able to make good what I have spoken; it shall come to pass, nothing shall prevent it, for I will do it myself, I will not go back upon any entertainies, the decree is gone forth, and I will not spare in compassion to them, neither will I repent." He will neither change his mind nor his way. Hereby the prophet was forbidden to intercede for them, and they were forbidden to flatter themselves with hopes of an escape. God hath said it, and he will do it. Note, The declarations of God's wrath against sinners are as inviolable as the assurances he has given of favour to his people; and the case of such is sad indeed, who have brought it to this issue, that either God must be false, or they must be damned.

15. Also the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, 16. Son of man, behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke; yet shall not thou mourn nor weep, neither shall thy tears run down. 17. Forbear to cry, make no mourning for the dead, bind the tire of thy head upon thee, and put on thy shoes upon thy feet, and cover not thy lips, and eat not the bread of men. 18. So I spake unto the people in the morning; and at even my wife died; and I did in the morning as I was commanded. 19. And the people said unto me, Wilt thou not tell us what these things are to us, that thou dost so? 20. Then I answered them, The word of the Lord came unto me, saying, 21. Speak unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will profane my sanctuary, the excellency of your strength, the desire of your eyes, and that which your soul piteth; and your sons and your daughters whom ye have left shall fall by the sword. 22. And ye shall do as I have done; ye shall not cover your lips, nor eat the bread of men. 23. And your tires shall be upon your heads, and your shoes upon your feet; ye shall not mourn nor weep; but ye shall pine away for your iniquities, and mourn one towards another. 24. Thus Ezekiel is unto you a sign: according to all that he hath done shall ye do; and when this cometh, ye shall know that I am the Lord God. 25. Also, thou son of man, shall it not be in the day when I take from them their strength, the joy of their glory, the desire of their eyes, and that wherewith they set their minds, their sons and their daughters, 26. That he that escapeth in that day shall come unto thee, to cause thee to hear it with thine ears? 27. In that day shall thy mouth be opened to him which is escaped, and thou shalt speak, and be no more dumb: and thou shalt be a sign unto them; and they shall know that I am the Lord.

These verses conclude what we have been upon all along from the beginning of this book, to wit, Ezekiel's prophecies of the destruction of Jerusalem; for, after this, though he prophesied much concerning other nations, yet he said no more concerning Jerusalem, till he heard of the destruction of it, almost three years after, ch. xxxiii. 21. He had assured them, in the former part of this chapter, that there was no hope at all of the preventing of the trouble; here he assures them that they should not have the ease of weeping for it. Observe here,

1. The sign by which this was represented to them, and was a sign that cost the prophet very dear; the more shame for them, that when he, by a divine appointment, was at such an expense to affect them with what he had to deliver, yet they were not affected by it. 1. He must lose a good wife, that should suddenly be taken from him by death. God gave him notice of it before, that it might be the less surprise to him; (v. 15.) Behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke. Note, (1.) A married state may very well agree with the prophetic office; it is honourable in all, and therefore not sinful in ministers. (2.) Much of the comfort of human life lies in agreeable relations: no doubt, Ezekiel found a
and his command must be obeyed, even in that which is most difficult and displeasing to us. (2.) Though mourning for the dead is acceptable to God, it must always be kept under the government of religion and right reason, and we must not sorrow as those that have no hope, nor lament the loss of any creature, even the most valuable, and that which we could worst spare, as if we had lost our God, or as if all our happiness were gone with it; and of this, God inquired in mourning, ministers, when it is their case, over your dead brethren, or over the dead body of any man, to give them time study to improve the affliction, to accommodate ourselves to it, and to get our acquaintance with the other world increased, by the removal of our dear relations, and learn with holy Job to bless the name of the Lord, even when he takes as well as when he gives.

II. The explication and application of this passage. The people required the meaning of it: (v. 19.)

Wilt thou not tell us what these things are to us, that thou dost not? They knew that Ezekiel was an affectionate husband, that the death of his wife was a great affliction to him, and that he would not appear so unconcerned at it but for some good reason, and for instruction to them; and perhaps they were in hopes that it had a favourable signification, and would refresh them again. If Ezekiel comfort them, then he may also comfort them again according to the time he had afflict them, and make them look pleasant again. Note, When we are inquiring concerning the things of God, our inquiry must be, "What are those things to us? What are we concerned in them? What conviction, what counsel, what comfort, do they speak to us? Wherewith do they reach our case?"

Ezekiel gives them an answer verbatim, as he had received it from the Lord, who had told him what he must speak to the house of Israel.

1. Let them know that as Ezekiel's wife was taken from him by a stroke, so would God take from them all that which was dearest to them, v. 21. If this were done to the green trees, what shall be done to the dry? If a faithful servant of God was thus affected only for his trial, shall such a generation of rebels against God go unpunished? By this awakening providence God showed that he was in earnest in his threatenings, and inexorable. We may suppose that Ezekiel prayed that, if it were the will of God, his wife might be spared to him, but God would not hear him; and should he be heard then in his intercessions for this provoking people! No, it is determined; God will take away the desire of your eyes! Note, None should ask God to make us happy by taking away the joy of our eyes. We should be content to witness for ourselves with others; for are we better than they? We know not how soon the cup, or a more bitter one, may be put into our hands, and should therefore weep with them that weep, as being ourselves also in the body.

God will take away the desire of your eyes, which is a judgment as well as a punishment, the removal of all those things which men were so much in love with, (if so much read it;) you shall lose that which you most dread the loss of. And what is that? (1.) That which was their public pride, the temple; "I will profane my sanctuary, by giving that into the enemy's hand, to be plundered and burnt." This was signified by the death of a wife, a dear wife, to teach us that God's sanctuary should be dearer to us, and we should, in the eye of God, regard the sanctuary, or the church, (as Christ's church, that is his spouse, should be ours too.) Though these people were very corrupt, and had themselves profaned the sanctuary, it is called the desire of their eyes. Note, Many that are destitute of the power of godliness, are yet very fond of the form of it; and it is just with God to punish them for their hypocrisy by depriving them of that too. The sanctuary is here called the excellence of their strength; they had many strong...
olds and places of defence, but the temple excelled them all; it was the pride of their strength; they prided in it as their strength, that they were the temple of the Lord, Jer. vii. 4. Note, The church-privileges that men are proud of, are profaned by their sins, and it is just with God to profane them by his judgments. And with these God will take away, (35.) Their strength, their security, their pride, they looked upon with delight: "Your sons and your daughters (which are the dearer to you, because they are but a few left of many; the rest having perished by famine and pestilence) shall fall by the sword of the Chaldeans." What a dreadful spectacle would it be to see their own children, pieces, pictures of themselves, whom they had taken sin and strength, lying down as the things they loved as their own souls, sacrificed to the rage of the merciless conquerors! This, this was the punishment of sin.

2. Let them know that as Ezekiel wept not for his affliction, so neither should they weep for theirs. He must say, Ye shall do as I have done, v. 22. Ye shall not mourn nor weep, v. 23. Jeremiah had told them the same, that men shall not lament for the dead, nor cut themselves; Jer. xvi. 6.) not that there shall be any such merciful circumstances without, or any such degrees of wisdom and grace within, as shall mitigate and moderate the sorrow; but they shall not mourn; for, (1.) Their grief shall be so great, that they shall be quite overwhelmed with it, their passions shall stifle them, and they shall have no ability to look to themselves by giving vent to it. (2.) Their calamities shall cause them to miss both one upon another of their peculiar griefs; (Job xi. 10.) and perfectly stupefied, and moped (as we say) with them. (3.) They shall not dare to express their grief, for fear of being deemed disaffected to the conquerors, who would take their lamentations as an earnest of disturbance to their triumphs. (4.) They shall neither have hearts, nor time, nor money, whereby to put themselves in mourning, and accommodate themselves with the ceremonies of grief: "You will be so entirely taken up with solid, substantial grief, that you will have no room for the shadow of it." (5.) Particular mourners shall not need to distinguish themselves by covering their lips, and laying aside their ornaments, and going barefoot, because it was not the fashion; (Isa. iii. 17.) no mourner. (6.) There shall be none of that sense of their affliction and sorrow for it, which would help to bring them to repentance, but that only which shall drive them to despair; so it follows, "Ye shall pine away for your iniquities, with scared consciences and reproachable minds, and ye shall mourn, not to God in prayer and confession of sin, but one another withal." mourning, and for no other reason but explaining of God, thus making their burthen heavier and their wound more grievous, as impotent people do under their afflictions, by mingling their own passions with them.

III. An appeal to the event, for the confirmation of all this: (v. 24.) "When this comes, as it is foretold, when Jerusalem, which is this day besieged, is quite destroyed and laid waste, which now yet cannot believe will ever be, then ye shall know that I am the Lord God, who have given you this fair warning of it. Then you will remember that Ezekiel was to you a sign." Note, Those who regard not the threatenings of the word when they are foretold, will be made to remember them when they come to be accomplished. 1. The great destruction which the siege of Jerusalem should end in; (v. 25.) In that day, that terrible day, when the city should be broken up, I will take from them. (1.) That which they depended on; their strength, their walls, their treasures, their for-

EZEKIEL, XXV.

Judgment began at the house of God, and therefore with them the prophets began, who were the judges; but it must not end there, and their work must not. Ezekiel had finished his time among those which related to the destruction of Jerusalem. As to that, he was ordered to say no more, but stand upon his watch-tower, and wait the issue; and yet, when it should be said, there are divers nations bordering upon the land of Israel, which have prophesied against, as Isaiah and Jeremiah had done before; and must proclaim God's controversy with them, chiefly for the injuries and indignities which they had done to the people of God in the day of their calamity. In this chapter, we have his prophecy, 1. Against the Ammonites, v. 1-7. 2. Against the Moabites, v. 8-11. 3. Against the Edomites, v. 12-14. 4. Against the Philistines, v. 15-17. To whom it is likely he refers them, is, their barbarous and insolent conduct toward God's Israel; for which God threatens to put the same cup of trembling into their hands. God's resenting it thus would be the effect of their iniquities, and the ruin of their state; though he had dealt thus severely with them, yet he had not cast them off, but would still own them, and plead their cause.

1. The word of the Lord came again unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, set
thy face against the Ammonites, and prophesy against them; 3. And say unto the Ammonites, Hear the word of the Lord God; Thus saith the Lord God, Because thou saidst, Aha, against my sanctuary, when it was profaned; and against the land of Israel, when it was desolate; and against the house of Judah, when they went into captivity: 4. Behold, therefore, I will deliver thee to the men of the east for a possession, and they shall set their palaces in thee, and make their dwellings in thee: they shall eat thy fruit, and they shall drink thy milk. 5. And I will make Rabbah a stable for camels, and the Ammonites a couching-place for flocks; and ye shall know that I am the Lord. 6. For thus saith the Lord God, Because thou hast clapped thy hands, and stamped with the feet, and rejoiced in heart with all thy despite against the land of Israel; 7. Behold, therefore, I will stretch out my hand upon thee, and will deliver thee for a spoil to the heathen; and I will cut thee off from the people, and I will cause thee to perish out of the countries: I will destroy thee; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord.

Here,
1. The prophet is ordered to address himself to the Ammonites, in the name of the Lord Jehovah, the God of Israel, who is also the God of the whole earth. But what can Chemosh, the god of the children of Ammon, say, in answer to it? He is bidden to set his face against the Ammonites, for he is God's representative as a prophet, and thus he must signify that God set his face against them, for the face of the Lord is against them that do evil, Ps. xxxiv. 16. He must speak with boldness and assurance, as one that knew whose errand he went upon, and that he should be borne out in delivering it. He must therefore set his face as a flint, Isa. 1. 7. He must show his displeasure against these proud enemies of Israel, and face them down, though they were very impudent and very insulting; and he must prophesy so much and so long against Israel, yet still he was for Israel, and, while he witnessed against their corruptions, adhered to, and gloried in, God's covenant with them. Note, Those are miserable that have the preaching and praying of God's prophets against them; against whom their faces are set.

II. He is directed what to say to them. Ezekiel is now a captive in Babylon, and has been so many years in the uppermost town of the state of his own nation, much less of the nations that were about it; but God tells him both what they were doing, and what he was about to do with them. And thus by the spirit of prophecy he is enabled to speak as pertinently to their case as if he had been among them.

1. He must upbraid the Ammonites with their insolent and barbarous triumphs over God's people of Israel, and of the Ammonites. The Ammonites said, when all went against the Jews, Aha, so would we have it. They were glad to see, (1.) The temple burned, the sanctuary profaned by the victorious Chaldeans; this is put first, to intimate what was the cause of the controversy; they had an enmity to the Jews for the sake of their religion, though it was only some poor remains of the profession of it that were to be found among them. (2.) The nation ruined. They rejoiced when the land of Israel was made desolate, the cities burnt, the countys wasted, and both depopulated, and when the house of Judah went into captivity. When they had not power to oppress God's Israel themselves, they were pleased to see the Chaldeans oppress them; partly because they envied their wealth and the good land they enjoyed, partly because they feared their growing power, and partly because they hated their religion, and the divine oracles there were for their instruction; but it was a great sin in them, (v. 6.) They clapped with their hands, to irritate the rage of the Chaldeans, and to set them on as dogs upon the game; or, they clapped their hands in triumph, attended this tragedy with their Plaudite—Give us your applause, thinking it well acted; never was there any thing more diverting or entertaining to them. They stamped with their feet, ready to leap and dance for joy upon this occasion; they not only rejoiced in heart, but they could not forbear showing it; though every one that had any sense of honour and humanity would cry shame upon them for it. Especially considering that they rejoiced thus, not for any thing they got by Israel's fall; if so, they had been the more excusable. Most people are for themselves. But this was purely from a principle of malice and enmity: Thus he is provoked, and saith, I will set his face against thee, Ezek. ii. 8. He is both scorn and hatred against the land of Israel. Note, The people of God have always had a great deal of ill-will borne them by this wicked world; and their calamities have been their neighbours' entertainments. See to what unnatural instances of malice the enmity that is in the seed of the serpent against the seed of the woman, will carry them. The Ammonites, of all people, should not have re

2. The prophet tells what shall befall the Ammonites, so as to make them cool, and to show them the danger they were in, and the ruin to which they were committed. The Chaldeans, who had spoilt them, would spoil them again, and they should be utterly put to shame, (1.) The Chaldeans would destroy their palaces, and they should be burnt; (2.) The Ammonites should become a habitation for camels, and a pasture for flocks; (3.) The Chaldeans would possess them, and they should become spoil and prey to the heathen; (4.) They should be cut off from the people, and they should be destroyed, and their race should be cut off; and this was at length to be their case. Note, The fineness of the word of prophecy greatly exceeds that of its fulfilment; but as the fineness of a re

4. The Ammonites and the Chaldeans were not the only enemies to whom God's people were in danger of being delivered up, and cast into captivity.

5. Therefore, (1.) The Chaldeans that had possessed them were to be punished. For thus saith the Lord God, Against the Chaldeans will I judge, Ps. lxxi. 9. The Chaldeans were the instruments of God's anger, and God's anger was to them a renewal. (2.) The Ammonites that were the instruments of God's anger were to be punished. For thus saith the Lord God, Against the Ammonites will I judge, Ps. lxxi. 9. The Ammonites had insulted God's people in two particulars; they had profaned his sanctuary, and they had joined with the Chaldeans against his people, and both these were to be punished.

6. Therefore, (1.) To the Chaldeans, that had been the instruments of God's anger, God says, I will lift up mine hand upon thee, and make mine eye to fall upon thee. The Chaldeans were to be destroyed; they should have no room in the land, but should be cut off by fire. (2.) To the Ammonites, that were the instruments of God's anger, God says, I will execute mine anger upon thee, and mine eyes shall fall upon thee. The Ammonites were to be cut off from the land, and to be desolate, the towns of them to be burned, and their palaces to be laid waste; they should not have any thing saved for them. Note, Those that are in the hand of God's anger are to be punished; and those that are instruments in God's anger are to be punished more severely. (3.) The Chaldeans were to have occasion to lament, and to curse those days, and to say, Why have we done this? (4.) The Ammonites were to have occasion to lament, and to curse those days, and to say, Why have we done this? Note, It is not the intent of God to do evil in the world, but for good and his name's sake; yet he will take occasion to make those that were instruments of his anger lament, and to curse those days. (5.) The Chaldeans that had been instruments of God's anger would be a destruction to them that had been instruments of God's anger; and the instruments of God's anger would be a destruction to those that had been instruments of God's anger. Note, God's anger turns in upon himself; he that was the instrument of his anger is himself the instrument of his anger, and the instruments of his anger are destroyed by him. (6.) The Chaldeans and the Ammonites that had been instruments of God's anger would be a destruction to all that were instruments of God's anger.
They made their dwellings, v. 4. They enjoyed the products of the country; They shall eat thy fruit, and drink thy milk; and the milk from the cattle is the fruit of the ground at second-hand. They made use even of the royal city for their cattle; (v. 5.) I will make Rabbah, that was a nice and splendid city, to be a stable for camels; for its new masters, whose wealth lies all in cattle, will not think they can put the palaces of Rabbah to a better use. Rabbah had been a holy place, a sanctuary, and judgment seat, it is now made a stable for camels; and the country a couching-place for fleeces, more innocent beasts than those with which it had been before replenished. (2.) God himself acts as an Enemy to them; (v. 7.) I will stretch out mine hand upon thee, a hand that will reach far, and strike home, which there is no resisting the blow of, for it is a mighty hand; nor bearing the weight of, for it is a heavy hand. God's hand stretched out against the Ammonites will not only deliver them for a spoil to the heathen, so that their neighbours shall prey upon them, but will eat them off from the people, and make them desolate out of the countries, so that there shall be no remains of them in that place. Compare with this, Jer. xxix. 1. &c. What can sound more terrible than that resolution, (v. 7.) For I will deliver thee into the hand of the heathen; for the heathen are then to be both to save and to destroy, and it is a fearful thing to fall into his hands. Both the threatenings here, (v. 5. and v. 7.) conclude with this, Ye shall know that I am the Lord. For, (1.) Thus God will maintain his own honour, and will make it appear that he is the God of Israel, though he suffers them for a time to be captives in Babylon. (2.) Thus he will bring those that were strangers to him, into an acquaintance with him, and it will be a blessed effect of their calamities. Better know God, and be poor, than be rich, and ignorant of him. 

8. Thus saith the Lord God, Because that Moab and Seir do say, Behold, the house of Judah is like unto all the heathen; 9. Therefore, behold, I will open the side of Moab for them, from his cities which are on his frontiers, the glory of the country, Bethjeshimoth, Baal-meon, and Kirjathaim, 10. Unto the men of the east with the Ammonites, and will give them in possession, that the Ammonites may not be remembered among the nations. 11. And I will execute judgments upon Moab; and they shall know that I am the Lord. 12. Thus saith the Lord God, Because that Edom hath dealt against the house of Judah by taking vengeance, and hath greatly offended, and revenged himself upon them; 13. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, I will also stretch out my hand upon Edom, and will cut off man and beast from it; and I will make it desolate from Teman; and they of Dedan shall fall by the sword. 14. And I will lay my vengeance upon Edom by the hand of my people Israel: and they shall do in Edom according to mine anger, and according to my fury; and they shall know my vengeance, saith the Lord God. 15. Thus saith the Lord God, Because the Philistines have dealt by revenge, and have taken vengeance with a despicable heart, to destroy it for the old hatred; 16. Therefore, thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will stretch out my hand upon the Philistines, and I will cut off the Chereethim, and destroy the remnant of the sea-coast. 17. And I will execute great vengeance upon them with furious recompenses; and they shall know that I am the Lord, when I shall lay my vengeance upon them.

Three more of Israel's ill-natured neighbours are here arraigned, convicted, and condemned to destruction, for contributing to, and triumphing in, Jerusalem's fall.

1. The Moabites. Seir, which was the seat of the Edomites, is joined with them, (v. 8.) because they said the same as the Moabites; but they were afterward reckoned with by themselves, v. 12. Now observe, 1. What was the sin of the Moabites; they said, Behold, the house of Judah is like unto all the heathen. They triumphed, (1.) In the apostacies of Israel, were pleased to see them forsake their God, and worship idols, and hoped that in a while their religion would be quite lost and forgotten, and the house of Judah could be, (2.) In the heathen, perfect idolaters. When those that profess religion, under the colour of their profession, encourage the enemies of religion to hope that it will in time sink, and be run down, and quite abandoned; but let the Moabites know that though there are those of the house of Judah who have made themselves like the heathen, yet there is a remnant that retain their integrity, the religion of the house of Judah shall recover itself, its peculiarities shall be preserved, it shall not lose itself among the heathen, but distinguish itself from them, till it deliver itself honourably into a better institution. (2.) They triumphed in the calamities of Israel. They said, The house of Judah is like all the heathen, in as bad a state as they; their God is no more able to deliver them from this overflowing scourge of these parts of the world, than the gods of the heathen are to deliver them. Where are the promises they gloried in, and all the wonders which they and their fathers told us of? What the better are they for the covenant of peculiarity, upon which they so much valued themselves? They that looked with so much scorn upon all the heathen, are now set upon a level with them, or rather sunk below them. Note, Those who judge only by outward appearances, are ready to conclude that the people of God have lost all their privileges, when they have lost their worldly prosperity; which does not follow, for good men, even in affliction, in captivity among the heathen, have graces and comforts within, sufficient to distinguish them from all the heathen. Though the event seem one to the righteous and wicked, yet indeed it is vastly different. 2. What should be the punishment of Moab for this sin; because they triumphed in the overthrow of Judah, their country shall be in like manner overthrown with that of the Ammonites, who were guilty of the same sin; (v. 9, 10.) I will open the side of Moab, will uncover its shoulder, will take away all its defences, that it may become an easy prey to any that will make a prey of it. (1.) See here how the destruction of Edom was to be extensive, that were its strength and guard, shall be demolished by the Chaldean forces, and laid open. Some of the cities are here named, which are said to be the glory of the country, which they trusted in, and boasted of, as impregnable; these shall decay, be deserted, or betrayed, or fall into the enemy's hand, (2.) That Moab shall lie exposed, and whoever will, may penetrate into the heart of the country. Note, Those who glory in any other defence and protection than that of the divine power, providence, and
promise, will, sooner or later, see cause to be ashamed of their glorying. (2.) See here to whom it shall be exposed; *The men of the east, when they come to take possession of the dominion of the Ammonites, shall see that of the Moabites too; God, the Lord of all lands, will give them that land; for the kingdoms of men he gives to whomever he will. The Arameans, who are shepherds, and live quietly, plain men dwelling in tents, shall by an overruling Providence be put in possession of the land of the Moabites, who are soldiers, men of war, and cunning hunters, that live turbulently. The Chaldeans shall get it by war, and the Arameans shall enjoy it in peace. Concerning the Ammonites it is said, They shall no more be remembered among the nations. (v. 10.) for they had been necessary to the murder of Gedaliah, Jer. xiv. 14. But of the Moabites it is said, I will execute judgments upon Moab; they shall feel the weight of God's displeasure, but perhaps not to that degree that the Ammonites shall; however, so far as that, they shall know that I am the Lord; that the God of Israel is a God of power, and that his covenant with his people is not broken.

II. The Edomites, the posterity of Esau, betwixt whom and Jacob there had been an old enmity. And here is,

1. The sin of the Edomites, v. 12. They not only triumphed in the ruin of Judah, and Jerusalem, as the Moabites and Ammonites had done, but they took advantage from the present distressed state to which the Jews were reduced, to do them some real mischief; probably, made inroads upon their frontiers, and plundered their country; Edom has dealt against the house of Judah by taking vengeance. The Edomites had of old been tributaries to the Jews, according to the sentence that the elder shall serve the younger, Gen. xxv. 31. Amaziah severely chastised them, (2 Kings xiv. 7.) and for this they took vengeance; now they would pay off all the old scores; and not only incensed the Babylonians against Jerusalem, crying, Raze it, raze it, (Ps. cxlviii. 7.) but cut off those that escaped; as we find in the prophecy of Obadiah, which is wholly directed against Edom, v. 11. I will recompense them, (as I have here raving vengeance, a revenge, which intimated that they were not only eager upon it, but very cruel in it, and recompensed to the Jews more than double. Herein he has greatly offended. Note, It is a great offence to God for us to revenge ourselves upon our brother; for God has said, Vengeance is mine. We are forbidden to revenge, or to bear a grudge. Suppose Judah had been hard upon Edom formerly, it was a base thing for the Edomites now, in revenge for it, to smite them secretly; but the Jews had a divine warrant to reign over the Edomites, for that therefore they ought not to have made reprisals; and it was the more disingenuous for them to retain the old enmity, when God had particularly commanded his people to forget it. (Deut. xxiii. 7.) Thou shalt not abhor an Edomite.

2. The judgments threatened against them for this sin of theirs, v. 13. (a.) I will stretch out my hand upon Edom. Their country shall be desolate from Teman, which lay in the south part of it; and they shall fall by the sword unto Dedan, which lay north; the desolations of war should go through the nation. (1.) They had taken vengeance, and therefore God will lay his vengeance upon them; (v. 14.) They shall know my vengeance; (v. 15.) They shall know my hatred; (v. 16.) I will execute vengeance upon Edom, according to the strength of my anger, and according to my fury, not according to the weakness of the instruments that are employed in it, but according to the strength of the arm that employs them. (2.) They had taken vengeance on Israel, and God will lay his vengeance on them also; here is hatred of his people; they suffered much by the Chaldeans, which seems to be referred to, Jer. xxxix. 8. But besides that there were savioirs to come upon mankind, Zeb, who should judge the mount of Esan, (Obad. 21.) and Israel's Redeemer comes with dyed garments from Bozrah, (Isa. lxiii. 1.) this implies a promise that Israel should recover itself again, to that degree as to be in a capacity of curbing the insolence of its neighbours. And we find (1 Mac. v.) that Judas Maccabaeus fought against the children of Esau in Idumea, gave them a great overthow, abated their courage, and took their spoil. And Josephus says (Antiq. lib. 13. cap. 17.) that Hircanus made the Edomites tributaries to Israel. Note, The equity of God's judgments is to be observed, when he not only avenge injuries upon those that did them, but by these against whom they were done.

III. The Philistines. And, 1. Their sin is much the same with that of the Edomites; They have dealt by revenge with the people of Israel, and have taken vengeance with a despicable heart, not to disturb them only, but to destroy them, for the old hatred, (v. 15.) the old grudge they bore them, or, as the margin furnishes it, with perverted hatred, a hatred that began long since, and which they had not since solved to continue; the anger was irremovable, they dealt by revenge, traded in the acts of malice; it was their constant practice, and their heart, their spiteful heart, was upon it. 2. Their punishment likewise is much the same, v. 16. They that were for destroying God's people, shall themselves be cut off and destroyed. (v. 17.) They that were for avenging this, they were avenged themselves, and they had the greater vengeance upon them. This was fulfilled when that country was wasted by the Chaldean army, not long after the destruction of Jerusalem, which is foretold, Jer. xlvi. It was strange that these nations, which bordered upon the land of Israel, were not alarmed by the success of the Chaldean army, and made to tremble in the apprehensions of their own danger; we have in the next chapter a history of the calamity that befell the horrid nation of Tyre, Isa. xxx. It was time to look to their own; but their impity and malice made them forget their politics, till God by his judgments convinced them that the cup was going round, and they were not the less safe for their being secure.

CHAP. XXVI.

The prophet had so soon done with those four nations that he set his face against in the foregoing chapters; for they were not at that time very considerable in the world, nor would their fall make any great noise among the nations, nor any figure in history. But the city of Tyre is next set to the bar, which, being a place of vast trade, was known all the world over; and therefore here are three whole chapters, this and the two that follow, spent in the prosecution of the destruction of that city, the horrid nation of Tyre, Isa. xxxiii. It is but just mentioned in Jeremiah, as sharing with the natives in the common calamity, ch. xxv. 22. —xxvii. 3. —xxviii. 1. But Ezekiel is ordered to deal large upon that head. In this chapter we have, I. The sin charged upon Tyre, which was, triumphing in the destruction of Jerusalem, v. 2. II. The destruction of Tyrus itself foretold. v. 11. The extremity of their calamities. v. 12. — 14. But Tyre, which was an island, and their kingdom was an island, excepting the island of Cyprus; no nation that was an island then was an island, for it was a word of the Lord that the word of the Lord came unto me.
saying, 2. Son of man, because that Ty-
rus hath said against Jerusalem, Aha, she is
broken that was the gates of the people;
she is turned unto me; I shall be reple-
nished, now she is laid waste: 3. Therefore
thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I am
against thee, O Tyrus, and will cause many
nations to come up against thee, as the sea
causeth his waves to come up. 4. And they
shall destroy the walls of Tyrus, and break
down her towers: I will also scrape her
dust from her, and make her like the top of
a rock. 5. It shall be a place for the
spreading of nets in the midst of the sea:
for I have spoken it, saith the Lord God;
and it shall become a spoil to the nations.
6. And her daughters which are in the field
shall be slain by the sword; and they shall
know that I am the Lord. 7. For thus
saith the Lord God, Behold, I will bring
upon Tyrus Nebuchadrezzar king of Baby-
lon, a king of kings, from the north, with
horses, and with chariots, and with horse-
men, and companies, and much people. 8.
He shall slay with the sword thy daughters
in the field; and he shall make a fort against
thee, and cast a mount against thee, and
lift up the buckler against thee. 9. He
shall set engines of war against thy walls,
and with his axes he shall break down thy
towers. 10. By reason of the abundance
of his horses their dust shall cover thee;
thy walls shall shake at the noise of the
horsemen, and of the wheels, and of the
chariots, when he shall enter into thy gates,
as men enter into a city wherein is made a
breach. 11. With the hoofs of his horses
shall he tread down all thy streets: he shall
slay thy people by the sword, and thy strong
garrisons shall go down to the ground.
12. And they shall make a spoil of thy riches,
and make a prey of thy merchandise; and
they shall break down thy walls, and de-
stroy thy pleasant houses: and they shall
lay thy stones, and thy timber, and thy dust,
in the midst of the water. 13. And I will
cause the noise of thy songs to cease; and
the sound of thy harps shall be no more
heard. 14. And I will make thee like the
top of a rock: thou shalt be a place to spread
nets upon; thou shalt be built no more: for
I the Lord have spoken it, saith the Lord
God.

This prophecy is dated in the eleventh year,
which was the year that Jerusalem was taken,
and in the first day of the month, but it is not said
what month; some think the month in which Jerusalem
was taken, was the fourth month, others the month
after; or perhaps it was the first month, and so it
was the first day of the year. Observe here,
I. The pleasure with which the Tyrians looked
upon the ruins of Jerusalem. Ezekiel was a great
way off, in Babylon, but God told him what Tyrus
said against Jerusalem; (v. 2.) Aha, she is broken,
broken to pieces, that was the gates of the people,
to whom there was a great resort, and where there
was a general rendezvous of all nations, some upon
one account, and some upon another, and I shall get
by it; all the wealth, power, and interest which
Jersusalem had, it is hoped, shall be turned to Tyre;
and so we are to understand it. The Tyrians, by
this, was hereby reproached and derided. 2. We
do not find that the Tyrians had such a
hatred and enmity to Jerusalem and the sanctuary
as the Ammonites and Edomites had, or were so
spiteful and mischievous to the Jews; they were
men of business, and of large acquaintance and free
conversation, and therefore were not so bigoted, and
of such a persecuting spirit, as the narrow souls
for spreading the name of their king, and the
Tyrians were not of the greatest magnificence; but
it was to get estates, and enlarge their trade, and
they looked upon Jerusalem not as an enemy, but as
a rival. Hiram, king of Tyre, was a good friend
to David and Solomon, and we do not read of any
quarrels the Jews had with the Tyrians; but Tyre
promised herself that the fall of Jerusalem would
be an advantage to her in respect of trade and con-
mmerce; they would make use of the commerce,
towers, and the great men from all parts that used
to come to Jerusalem for the accomplishing of them-
selves, and to spend their estates there, will now
come to Tyre, and spend them there; and whereas
many, since the Chaldean army became so formidable
in these parts, had retired into Jerusalem, and
brought their estates thither for safety, as the Re-
chites did, now they will come to Tyre, which,
being in a manner surrounded with the sea, will be
thought a place of greater strength than Jerusalem;
and thus the prosperity of Tyre will rise out of the
ruins of Jerusalem. Note, To be secretly pleased
with the death or decay of others when we are likely
to get by it, with their fall when we may thrive
upon it, is a sin that does most easily beset us, but is
designed to be such a bad thing, and so pro-
voke to God, as really it is. We are apt to say,
when those who stand in our light, in our way, are
removed, when they break, or fall into disgrace,
"We shall be replenished, now that they are laid
waste."
But this comes from a selfish, covetous
principle, and a desire to be placed alone in the
midst of the earth, as if we grudged that any
should live by us. This comes from a want of that
love to our neighbour which is necessarily a part of
the love of God so expressely requires, and from that inordinate
love of the world as our happiness, which the love
of God so expressely forbids. And it is just with
God to blast the designs and projects of those who
thus contrive to raise themselves upon the ruins of
others; and we see they are often disappointed.
II. The displeasure of God against them for it.
The providence of God had done well for Tyrus;
Tyre was a pleasant and wealthy city, and might
have continued so, if she had, as she ought to have
done, sympathized with Jerusalem in her calamities,
and sent her an address of condolence; but
when, instead of that, she showed herself pleased
with her neighbour's fall, and perhaps sent an
address of congratulation to the conquerors, then God
says, Behold, I will bring against thee. Ezek. xxvi.
And let her not expect to prosper long, if God be
against her.
1. God will bring formidable enemies upon her;
Many nations shall come against thee; an army
made up of many nations, or one nation that shall
be as strong as many. Those that have God against
them, may expect all the creatures against them;
for what peace can they have, with whom God is
at war? They shall come pouring in as the waves
of the sea, one upon the neck of another, with an
irresistible force. The person is named that shall bring this army upon them; Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, a king of kings, that had many kings tributaries to him, and dependants on him, beside those that were his captives, Dan. ii. 37, 38. He is that head of gold. He shall come with a vast army, horses and chariots, &c. all land forces; we do not find he had any naval force, or any thing whereewith he might attack it by sea, which makes the attempt the more difficult, as we find, ch. xxix. 18. where it is called a great service which he served against Tyre. He shall besiege it in form, (v. 8.) make a fort, and cast a mount, and (v. 9.) shall set engines of war against the walls. His troops shall be so numerous as to raise a dust that shall cover the city, v. 10. They shall make a noise that shall even shake the walls, and bring them down; and shall shake the earth, when they enter a city that is broken up; the horses prance with so much fury and violence, that they shall even tread down the streets though ever so well paved.

2. They shall do terrible execution. (1.) The enemy shall make themselves masters of all their fortifications, shall destroy the walls, and break down the towers, v. 4. For what walls are strong that can withstand the force of his strong garrisons? (2.) They shall destroy the strong garrisons, and remove the judgments of God? Her strong garrisons shall go down to the ground, v. 11. And the walls shall be broken down, v. 12. The city held out a long siege, but it was taken at last. (2.) A great deal of blood shall be shed; Her daughters which are in the field, the cities upon the continent, which were subject to Tyre as the mother city, the inhabitants of them shall be slain by the sword, v. 6. The invaders begin with them that come first in their way. And, (v. 11.) he shall stay thy people with the sword; not only the soldiers that are found in arms, but theburghers, shall be put to the sword, the king of Babylon being highly incensed against them for holding out so long. (3.) The wealth of the city shall all become a spoil to the conqueror; (v. 12.) They made a firey of the merchandise; it was in hope of the plunder, that the city was set upon with so much vigour. See the vanity of riches, that they are kept for the owners to their hurt; enticing and reconcile thieves, and not only cease to benefit those who took pains for them, and were duly entitled to them, but are made to serve their enemies, who were thereby put into a capacity of doing them so much the more mischief. (4.) The city itself shall be taken; The city is broken down, and the houses thereof destroyed; (v. 12.) such as were pleasantly situated, beautified, and furnished, shall become a heap of rubbish. Let none please themselves too much in their pleasant houses, for they know not how soon they may see the desolation of them. Tyre shall be utterly ruined; the enemy shall not only pull down the houses, but shall carry away the stones and the timber, which might seem so great building in the midst of the water, not to be recovered, or ever made use of again. Nay, (v. 4.) I will scrape her dust from her; not only shall the loose dust be blown away, but the very ground it stands upon shall be torn up by the enraged enemy, carried off, and laid in the midst of the water, v. 12. The foundation is in the dust, that shall be all taken away, and then the city itself, as the remainder of the work was destroyed, it was ploughed like a field, Mic. iii. 12. But the destruction of Tyre is carried farther than that; the very soil of it shall be scraped away, and it shall be made like the top of a rock, (v. 4, 14.) pure rock that has no earth to cover it; it shall only be a place for the spreading of nets, (v. 5, 14.) it shall serve fishermen to dry their nets upon, and mend them. (5.) There shall be a full period to all its mirth and joy; (v. 13.) I will cause the noise of thy songs to cease. Tyre had been a joyous city, (Isa. xxiii. 7.) with her songs she had courted customers to deal with her in a way of trade; but now farewell all her profitable commerce and pleasant conversation; Tyre is no more a place either of business or of sport. Lastly, It shall be built no more, (v. 14.) not built any more as it had been, with such state and magnificence; nor built any more in the same place, for it shall not be built again of a long time; the present inhabitants shall be destroyed or dispersed, so that this Tyre shall be no more. For God has spoken it, (v. 5, 14.) and when what he has said is accomplished, they shall know thereby that he is the Lord, and not a man that he should lie, or the son of man that he should repent.

15. Thus saith the Lord God to Tyre Shall not the isles shake at the sound of thy fall, when the wounded cry, when the slaughter is made in the midst of thee? 16. Then all the princes of the sea shall come down from their thrones, and lay away their robes, and put off their brodered garments: they shall clothe themselves with trembling; they shall sit upon the ground, and shall tremble at every moment, and be astonished at thee, 17. And they shall take up a lamentation for thee, and say to thee, How art thou destroyed that wast inhabited of sea-faring men, the renowned city which was strong in the sea, she and her inhabitants, which cause their terror to be on all that haunt it! 18. Now shall the isles tremble in the day of thy fall; yea, the isles that are in the sea shall be troubled at thy departure. 19. For thus saith the Lord God, When I shall make thee a desolate city, like the cities that are not inhabited; when I shall bring up the deep upon thee, and great waters shall cover thee; 20. When I shall bring thee down with them that descend into the pit, with the people of old time, and shall set thee in the low parts of the earth, in places desolate of old, with them that go down to the pit, that thou be not inhabited; and I shall set glory in the land of the living; 21. I will make thee a terror, and thou shalt be no more; though thou be sought for, yet shalt thou never be found again, saith the Lord God.

The utter ruin of Tyre is here represented in very strong and lively figures, which are exceedingly affecting. 1. See how high, how great Tyre had been, how little likely ever to have come to this. The remembrance of men's former grandeur and plenty is a great place, within the sea, present in any where and every where. Tyre was a renowned city, (v. 17.) famous among the nations, the crowning city, (so she is called, Isa. xxxii. 8.) a city that had crowns in her gift, honoured all she smiled upon, crowned herself and all about her; she was inhabited of seas, of those that trade at sea, of those who from all parts came thither by sea, bringing with them the abundance of the seas, and the treasures hid in the sand. She was strong in the sea; easy of access to her friends, but to her enemies inaccessible; fortified by a wall.
of water, which made her impregnable. So that she with her pomp, and her inhabitants with their pride, caused their terror to be on all that haunted that city, and upon any account frequently it. It was well fortified, and formidable in the eyes of all that acquainted themselves with it. Every body stood in awe of the Tyrians, and was afraid of dis-oblising them. Note, Those who know their strength are too apt to cause terror, to pride themselves in frightening those they are an over-match for.

2. See how low, how little, Tyre is made, v. 19, 20. This renowned city is made a desolate city, is no more frequented as it has been, there is no more resort of merchants to it, it is like the cities not inhabited, which are no cities, and, having none to keep them in repair, will go to decay of themselves. Tyre shall be like a city overflowed by an inundation of waters, which cover it, and upon which the deep is brought up. As the waves had formerly been its defence, so now they shall be its destruction. She shall be brought down with them that descend into the pit, with the cities of the old world that were under water, and with Sodom and Gomorrha, they shall be brought down together. Or, she shall be in the condition of those who have been long buried, of the people of old time, who are old inhabitants of the silent grave, who are quite rotted away under ground, and quite forgotten above ground; such shall Tyre be, free among the dead; set in the lower parts of the earth, humbled, mortified, reduced. It shall be like the places desolate of old, as well New persons may be, a new city upon a new spot of ground hard by, which they may call Tyre, but Tyre, as it is, shall never be any more. Note, The strongest cities in this world, the best fortified and best furnished, are subject to decay, and may in a little time be brought to nothing. In the history of our own island, many cities are spoken of as in being when the Romans were hasting to their conquests, scarce known where to look for, and of which there remains no more evidence, than Roman urns and coins dug up there sometimes accidentally. But in the other world we look for a city that shall stand for ever, and flourish in perfection through all the ages of eternity.

3. See what a distress the inhabitants of Tyre are in; (v. 15.) There is a great slaughter made in the midst of thee, many slain, and great men; it is probable, when the city was taken, that the generality of the inhabitants were put to the sword; then did the wounded cry, and they cried in vain, to the pitless conquerors; they cried quarter, but it would not be given them; the wounded are slain without mercy, or, rather, that is the only mercy that is showed them, that the second blow shall rid them of their pain.

4. See what a consternation all the neighbours are in, upon the fall of Tyre. This is elegantly expressed here, to show how astonishing it should be. (1.) The islands shall shake at the sound of thy fall, v. 15. As when a great merchant breaks, all that he deals with are shocked by it, and begin to look about them; perhaps they had effects in his hands, which he could not sell. Or, when they see one fail and become bankrupt of a sudden, in debt a great deal more than he is worth, it makes them afraid for themselves, lest they should do so too. Thus the isles, which thought themselves safe in the embraces of the sea, when they see Tyrus fall, shall tremble, and be troubled, saying, 'What will become of us?' And it is well if they make this good use of it, to take warning by it not to be secure, but to stand in awe of God and his judgments. The sudden fall of a great tower shakes the ground round about it; thus all the islands in the Mediterranean sea shall feel themselves sensible of the destruction of Tyre, it being a place and island, the more liberal, such interests in, and such a constant correspondent with. (2.) The princes of the sea shall be affected with it, who ruled in those islands; or, the rich merchants, who live like princes, (Is. xxiii. 8.) and the masters of ships, who command like princes, these shall condole the fall of Tyre, in a most compassionate manner; (v. 16.) They shall come down from their thrones, neglecting the business of their thrones, and despising the pomp of them; they shall lay away their robes of state, their brodered garments, and shall clothe themselves all over with trembling, with sackcloth that will make them shiver. Or, They shall by their own act and deed make themselves to trem-ble, or, rather, they shall make their thrones to tremble every moment at the thought of what has happened to Tyre, and for fear of what may happen to themselves; for what island is safe if Tyre be not? They shall take up a lamentation for thee, shall have elegies and mournful poems penned upon the fall of Tyre, v. 17. How are they destroyed! [1.] It shall be a great and true lamentation, and they shall be afflicted with wonder, that a place so well fortified by nature and art, so famed for politics, and so full of money, which is the sinews of war, and that held out so long and with so much bravery, should be taken at last; (v. 21.) I make thee a terror. Note, It is just with God to make those a terror to their neighbours, by the suddenness and strangeness of their punishment, who make themselves a terror to their neighbours by the abuse of their power. Tyre had caused her terror, (v. 17.) and now is made a terrible example. [2.] It shall be a great affliction to them, and they shall be affected with sorrow; (v. 17.) they shall take up a lamentation for Tyre, as thinking it a thousand pities that such a rich and splendid city should be thus laid in ruins. Even Jebus, when hewn down, 'tis said, in 1687, when they took it, there were no such lamentations for it, as when Tyre was destroyed; there was no lamentation for it, as when Tyre was destroyed. Note, How often to them that pass by; (Lam. i. 12.) but when Tyre, the trading city, fell, it was universally bemoaned. Note, Those who have the world in their hearts, lament the loss of great men more than the loss of good men. [3.] It shall be a loud alarm to them; They shall tremble in the day of thy fall, and shall be afraid of what they think that their own turn will be next. If Tyre fall who can stand? Howl, fir-trees, if such a cedar be shak- en. Note, The fall of others should awaken us out of our security. The death or decay of others in the world is a check to us, when we dream that our mountain stands strong, and shall not be moved.

5. See how the irreparable ruin of Tyre is ag-gregated to the prospect of the restoration of Israel. Thus shall Tyre sink, when I shall set great glory in the land of the living, v. 20. Note, (1.) The holy land is the land of the living; for none but holy souls are properly living souls; where living sacrifices are offered to the living God, and where the lively oracles are, there the land of the living is; there David hoped to see the goodness of the Lord, (Ps. xxvi. 13.) That was a type of heaven, which is indeed the land of the living. (2.) Through this land of the living may for a time lie under disgrace, yet God will again set glory in it; the glory that is departed shall return; and the restoration of what
they had been deprived of shall be so much more their glory. God will himself be the Glory of the lands that are the lands of the living. (3.) It will aggravate the misery of those that have their portion in the land of the dying, of those that are for ever dying, to behold the happiness of those, at the same time, that shall have their everlasting portion in the land of the living. When the rich man was himself in torment, he saw Lazarus in the bosom of Abraham, and glory set for him in the land of the living.

CHAP. XXVII.

Still we are attending the funeral of Tyre, and the lamentation for the fall of that renowned city. In this chapter, we have, 1. A large account of the dignity, wealth, and splendour of Tyre, while it was in its strength, the vast trade it drove, and the interest it had among the nations, (v. 1, 25.) which is designed to make its ruin the more lamentable. 2. A prediction of its fall and ruin, and the confusion and consternation which all its neighbours shall thereby be put into, v. 26.—36. And this is intended to stain the pride of all worldly glory, and, by setting the one over against the other, to let us see the vanity and uncertainty of the riches, honours, and pleasures of the world, and what little reason we have to place our happiness in those, or to be concerned for them; so that all this is written for our learning.

1. The word of the Lord came again unto me, saying, 2. Now, thou son of man, take up a lamentation for Tyre; 3. And say unto Tyre, O thou that art situate at the entry of the sea, which art a merchant of the people for many isles, Thus saith the Lord God, O Tyre, thou hast said, I am of perfect beauty. 4. Thy borders are in the midst of the seas, thy bulwarks have perfected thy beauty. 5. They have made all thy ship-boards of fir-trees of Senir; they have taken cedars from Lebanon to make masts for thee. 6. Of the oaks of Bashan have they made thine oars; the company of the Ashurites have made thy benches of ivory, brought out of the isles of Chittim. 7. Fine linen, with broidered work from Egypt, was that which thou spreadest forth to be thy sail: blue and purple from the isles of Elishah was that which covered thee. 8. The inhabitants of Zidon and Arvad were thy mariners: thy wise men, O Tyre, that were in thee were thy pilots. 9. The ancients of Gebal, and the wise men thereof, were in thee thy calkers: all the ships of the sea, with their mariners, were in thee to occupy thy merchandise. 10. They of Persia, and of Lud, and of Phint, were in thine army thy men of war: they hanged the shield and helmet in thee; they set forth thy comeliness. 11. The men of Arvad, with thine army, were upon thy walls round about, and the Gammadins were in thy towers: they hanged their shields upon thy walls round about: they have made thy beauty perfect. 12. Tarshish was thy merchant by reason of the multitude of all kind of riches: with silver, iron, tin, and lead, they traded in thy fairs. 13. Javan, Tubal, and Meshech, they were thy merchants: they traded the persons of men and vessels of brass in thy market. 14. They of the house of Togarmah traded in thy fairs with horses, and horsemen, and mules. 15. The men of Dedan were thy merchants; many isles were the merchandise of thy hand: they brought thee for a present, horns of ivory and ebony. 16. Syria was thy merchant by reason of the multitude of the wares of thy making: they occupied in thy fairs with emeralds, purple, and broidered work, and fine linen, and coral, and agate. 17. Judah, and the land of Israel, they were thy merchants: they traded in thy market wheat of Minnith and Pararg and hay, and oil, and balm. 18. Damascus was thy merchant in the multitude of the wares of thy making, for the multitude of all riches; in the wine of Helbon, and white wool. 19. Dan also and Javan, going to and fro, occupied in thy fairs: bright iron, cassia, and calamus, were in thy market. 20. Dedan was thy merchant in precious clothes for chars, 21. Arabia, and all the princes of Kedar, they occupied with thee in lambs, and rams, and goats; in these were thy merchants. 22. The merchants of Sheba and Raamah, they were thy merchants; they occupied in thy fairs with chief of all spaces, and with all precious stones, and gold. 23. Haren, and Canneh, and Eden, the merchants of Sheba, Assur, and Chittim, were thy merchants. 24. These were thy merchants in all sorts of things, in blue clothes, and broidered work, and in chests of rich apparel, bound with cords, and made of cedar, among thy merchandise. 25. The ships of Tarshish did sing of thee in thy market; and thou wast replenished, and made very glorious in the midst of the seas.

Here, 1. The prophet is ordered to take up a lamentation for Tyrus, v. 2. It was yet in the height of its prosperity, and there appeared not the least symptom of its decay; yet because its prosperity is its snare, is the cause of its pride and security, which will make its fall the more grievous. Even those that live at ease are to be lamented, if they are not preparing for trouble. He must lament it because its ruin is hastening on apace, it is sure, it is near; and though the prophet foretold it, and justify God in it, yet he must lament it. Note, We ought to lament the miseries of other nations, as well as of our own, out of an affection for mankind in general; it is a part of the honour we owe to all men to bewail their calamities, even those which they have brought upon themselves by their own folly.

11. He is directed what to say, and to say it in the name of the Lord Jehovah, a name not unknown in Tyre, and which shall be better known, ch. xxxvi. 6. 1. He must upbraid Tyre with her pride; O
Tyre, thou hast said, I am of perfect beauty, (v. 3.) of universal beauty, (so the word is,) every way accomplish'd, could behold nothing more where admired. Zion, that had the beauty of holiness, is called indeed the perfection of beauty, (Ps. I. 29,) that is the beauty of the Lord. But Tyre, because well built, and well filled with money and trade, will set up for a perfect beauty. Note, It is the folly of the children of this world to value themselves upon the pomp and pleasure they live in, to that foolishness built for the sake of man, and, if the Lord will, of these they will excel others, to think themselves perfect. But God takes notice of the vain conceits men have of themselves in their prosperity, when the mind is lifted up with the condition, and often, for the humbling of the spirit, finds ways to bring down the estate. Let none reckon themselves beautified any further than they are sanctified, nor say that they are of perfect beauty till they come to heaven.

2. He must upbraid Tyre with her prosperity, which was the matter of her pride. In elegies, it is usual to insert encomiums of those whose fall we lament; the prophet, accordingly, praises Tyre for all that she had that was praiseworthy. He has nothing to say of her religion, her piety, her charity, her love of piety; all she dar'd to do is to interest interest to do good offices among her neighbours; but she lived great, and had a great trade, and all the trading part of mankind made court to her. The prophet must describe her height and magnificence, that God may be the more glorified in her fall, as the God who looks upon every one that is proud, and abases them; hides them in the dust for many generations: (v. 4.) Thy builders have perfected thy beauty. They have so improved in architecture, that nothing appears in the builders of Tyre that can be found fault with; and yet it was not by their own genius, but which our father had set, but the God of our fathers, and which cannot be removed as other landmarks may, nor so easily got over. The people so situated may the more easily dwell alone, if they please, may the more easily traffic abroad, and keep a correspondence with the nations. We therefore of this island must own that he who determines the bounds of men's habitations, has a different perlct for us.

2. It was curiously built, according as the fashion then was; and, being a city on a hill, it made a glorious show, and tempted the ships that sailed by into her ports; (v. 4.) Thy builders have perfected thy beauty. They have so improved in architecture, that nothing appears in the builders of Tyre that can be found fault with; and yet it was not by their own genius, but which our father had set, but the God of our fathers, and which cannot be removed as other landmarks may, nor so easily got over. The people so situated may the more easily dwell alone, if they please, may the more easily traffic abroad, and keep a correspondence with the nations. We therefore of this island must own that he who determines the bounds of men's habitations, has a different perlct for us.

3. They made the boards, or planks, for the hulk of the ship, of fir-trees fetched from Senir, a mount in the land of Israel, joined with Hermon, Cant. iv. 8. Planks of fir were smooth and light, but not so lasting as our English oak. (2.) They had cedars from Lebanon, which were mourned over, and set up for cedars, v. 5. (3.) They had oaks from Bashan, (Isa. ii. 13,) to make ours of; for it is probable that their ships were mostly galleys, that go with oars. The people of Israel built few ships for themselves, but they furnished the Tyrians with timber for ship-building. Thus one country uses what another produces, and so they are serviceable one to another, and cannot be made up, so to speak, of all the parts of them. (4.) Such magnificence did they affect in building their ships, that they made the very boughs of ivory, which they fetched from the isles of Chittim, from Italy or Greece, and had workmen from the Ashurites or Assyrians to make them; so rich would they have their state-rooms in their ships to be. (5.) So very prodigal were they, that they made their sails of fine linen fetched from Egypt, and that embroidered too, v. 7. Or, it may be meant of their flags, (which they hoisted to signify what city they belonged to,) which were very costly. The word signifies a banner as well as a sail. (6.) They hung these rooms on ship-board with blue and purple, the richest cloths and rich-est dyes. (7.) They could get from the islands they traded with. For these Tyre were masters of the purple, which is therefore called the Tyrian dye, yet they must have that which was far-fetched.

4. These gallant ships were well manned, by men of great ingenuity and industry. The pilots and masters of the ships, that had command in their fleets, were of their own city, such as they could partake confidence in; (v. 8.) Thy wise men, O Tyre, that were in thee, were thy pilots. But for common sailors, they had them from other countries: The inhabitants of Arvad and Zidon were thy mariners; these came from cities near them: Zidon was sister to Tyre, not two leagues off, to the northward; there they bred able seamen, which is the interest of the maritime powers to support, and give all the_countenance they can to. They sent to Gebal in Syria for carvers, or strengtheners of the cloths, or pikmen, to step them when the ships came home, after long voyages, to be repaired. To do this, they had the ancients, and wise men, v. 9. For there is more need of wisdom and prudence to repair what is gone to decay than to build anew. In public matters there is occasion for the ancients and wise men, to beget the breaches, and the restorers of paths to dwell in them. The countries they traded with were at their service, and were willing to send men into their pay, or to fix their youths as apprentices in Tyre, or to put them on board their fleets; so that all the ships in the sea, with their mariners, were ready to occupy thy merchandise. Those that give good wages, shall have hands of all sorts.

5. Their city was guarded by a military force that was very considerable, v. 10, 11. The Tyrians were themselves wholly given to trade; but it was necessary that they should have a good army on foot, and therefore they took these of other states into their pay, such as were fittest for service; though they had them from afar, (which perhaps shall weigh in their account;) but by that time they were called the Gauls, or Gallicans; and some say they were robust men, that had a great deal of strength in their arms; yet the vulgar Latin renders it Hughes, men no longer than one's arm. They hung
their shields upon the walls in their magazines, or places of arms; or hung them out upon the walls of their houses in Some ancient manner, that perhaps for some such reasons, as seeming that they had given what provision was necessary for their own defence. Thus they set forth thy comeliness, (r. 10.) and made thy beauty perfect, r. 11. It contributed as much as any thing to the glory of Tyre, that it had those of all nations about in its service, except of the land of Israel, (though it lay next them,) which furnished them with such and such things, and that it furnished them with men; that would have intrusted upon the liberty and dignity of the Jewish nation, 2 Chron. ii. 17, 18. It was also the glory of Tyre that it had such a militia, so fit for service, and in constant pay; and such an armament, like that in the tower of David, where hung the shields of mighty men, Cant. iv. 4. It is observable, that there and here the armours are said to be furnished with shields and helme, defensive arms, not with swords and spears, offensive, though it is probable that there such; to intamate that the military force of a people must be intended only for their own protection, and not to invade and annoy their neighbours; to secure their own right, not to encroach upon the rights of others.

(6.) They had a vast trade, and a correspondence with nations far and near of the whole world. Some nations they dealt with in one commodity, and some in another, according as each its products or its manufacture were, and the fruits of nature or art were with which it was blessed. This is very much enlarged upon here, as that which was the principal glory of Tyre, and which supported all the rest. We do not find any where in scripture so many nations as parts of the known world in these few verses, as here; so that this chapter, some think, gives much light to the first account we have of the settlement of the nations after the flood, Gen. x. The critics have abundance of work here to find out the several places and nations spoken of; concerning many of them, their conjectures are different, and they leave us in the dark, and at much uncertainty; it is well that it is not material; modern surveys come short of explaing the ancient geography. We therefore will not amuse ourselves here with a particular enquiry, either concerning the traders, or the goods they traded in; we leave it to the critical expositors, and observe that only which is improvable.

[1.] We have reason to think that Ezekiel knew little, of his own knowledge, concerning the trade of Tyre: he was a priest, carried away captive far enough from the neighbourhood of Tyre, we may suppose, when he was young, there he had been eleven years. And yet he speaks of the particular merchandises of Tyre as nicely as if he had been comptroller of the custom-house there; by which it appears that he was divinity inspired in what he spoke and wrote. It is God that saith this, r. 3.

[2.] This account of the trade of Tyre intimates to us, 1. God’s providence in the prosperous success of what they do, whenever they are employed in their worldly business; not only when they are at church, praying and hearing, but when they are in their markets and fairs, and upon the exchange, buying and selling; which is a good reason why we should keep in all our dealings keep a conscience void of offence, and have our eye always upon him who was and is and is to come.

[3.] We may here observe the wisdom of God, and his goodness, as the common Father of mankind, in making one country to abound in one commodity, and another in another, and all more or less serviceable either to the necessity, or to the comfort and ornament, of human life. Non omnis fert omnia tellus—One land does not supply all the varieties of produce. Providence dispenses its gifts variously, some to each, and all to none, that they may be a mutual commerce among those whom God has created, as a regular not only to the private advantage, but to a common benefit. The earth is full of God’s riches, Ps. civ. 24. There is a multitude of all kind of riches in it, (as it is here, r. 12.) gathered off its surface, and digged out of its bowels. The earth is also full of the fruits of men’s ingenuity and industry, according as their genius leads them; now by exchange and barter these are made more extensively useful; thus what can be spared is helped off, and what is wanted is fetched in, in lieu of it, from the most distant countries. Those that are not tradesmen themselves, have reason to thank God for traders and merchants, by whom the productions of other countries are brought to our hands, as those of our own are by our husbandsmen. 

[5.] Beside the necessities that are here traded in, we see what abundance of things are here mentioned, that only serve to please fancy, and are made valuable only by men’s humour and custom; and yet God allows us to use them, and trade in them, and part with these things for them, which we can spare, that are of an intrinsic worth much beyond them. Here are horns of ivory and ebony, (r. 15.) that are brought for a present, exposed to sale, and offered in exchange, or, as some think, presented to the city, or the great men of it, to obtain their favour. Here are emeralds, coral, and agate, (r. 16.) all precious stones and gold, (r. 22.) which the world could better be without than iron and common stones. Here are, to please the taste and smell, the chief of all spices, (r. 22.) cassia and calamus, (r. 19.) and, for ornament, purple, brodered work, and fine linen; (r. 16.) precious clothes for chariots, (r. 20.) blue cloth, (which Tyre was famous for,) brodered work, and cheast of rich apparel, bound with rich cords, and made of cedar, a sweet wood to perfume the garments kept in them, r. 24. Upon the review of this invoice, or bill of parcels, we may justly say, What a great many things are here that we have no need of, and can live very comfortably without.

[6.] It is observable that Judah and the land of Israel were merchants in Tyre too; in a way of trade they were allowed to converse with the heathen. But they traded mostly in wheat, a substantial commodity, and necessary; wheath of Minnith and Pammag, two countries in Canna famous for the best wheat, as some think; the whole land indeed was a land of wheat, (Deut. viii. 8.) it had the first of kinds, and the best, (Deut. xxvii. 19.) maintained by corn fetched from the land of Israel: they traded likewise in honey, and oil, and balm, or rosin; all useful things, and not serving to pride or luxury. And the land which these were the staple commodities of, was that which was the glory of all lands, which God reserved for his peculiar people, not those that traded in spices and precious stones; and the Israelites were resolved to be peculiar in this also, and the rest of the world provided for if they have food convenient; for they that are acquainted with the delights of the children of God, will not set their hearts on the delights of the sons and daughters of men, or the treasures of kings and princes. We find indeed that the New Testament Babylon trades in such things as Tyre traded in, Rev. xviii. 12, 13. For, notwithstanding its pretensions to sanctity, it is a mere worldly interest.
[7.1] Though Tyre was a city of great merchandise, and they got abundance by buying and selling, importing commodities from one place, and exporting them to another, yet manufacture-trades were not neglected. The wares of their own making, and a multitude of such wares, are here spoken of, v. 16, 18. It is the wisdom of a nation to encourage art and industry, and not to bear hard upon the handicraft-tradesmen; for it contributes much to the wealth and honour of a nation to send abroad samples of their own making, which may bring them in the multitude of all riches. [8.] All this made Tyre very great and very proud; The ships of Tarshish did sing of thee in thy market, (v. 23.) thou wast admired and cried up by all the nations that had dealings with thee; for thou wast replenished in wealth and number of people, was beautified, and made very glorious, in the midst of the seas. These that grow very rich are cried up as very glorious; for riches are glorious things in the eyes of carnal people, Gen. xxxi. 1. 26. Thy rowers have brought thee into great waters; the east wind hath broken thee in the midst of the seas. 27. Thy riches, and thy fairs, thy merchandise, thy mariners, and thy pilots, thy calkers, and the occupiers of thy merchandise, and all thy men of war, that are in thee, and in all thy company, which is in the midst of thee, shall fall into the midst of the seas in the day of thy ruin. 28. The suburbs shall shake at the sound of the cry of thy pilots. 29. And all that handle the oar, the mariners, and all the pilots of the sea, shall come down from their ships, they shall stand upon the land; 30. And shall cause their voice to be heard against thee, and shall cry bitterly, and shall cast up dust upon their heads; they shall wallow themselves in the ashes: 31. And they shall make themselves utterly bald for thee, and gird them with sackcloth; and they shall weep for thee with bitterness of heart and bitter wailing. 32. And in their wailing they shall take up a lamentation for thee, and lament over thee, saying, What city is like Tyre, like the destroyed in the midst of the sea? 33. When thy wares went forth out of the seas, thou filledst many people: thou didst enrich the kings of the earth with the multitude of thy riches and of thy merchandise. 34. In the time when thou shalt be broken by the seas in the depths of the waters, thy merchandise, and all thy company in the midst of thee, shall fall. 35. All the inhabitants of the isles shall be astonished at thee, and their kings shall be sore afraid, they shall be troubled in their countenance. 36. The merchants among the people shall hiss at thee; thou shalt be a terror, and never shall be any more.

We have seen Tyre flourishing, here we have Tyre falling; and great is the fall of it, so much the greater for its having made such a figure in the world. Note, The most mighty and magnificent kingdoms and states, sooner or later, have their day; and when that is over, they are in the zenith, they will begin to decline; but the destruction of Tyre was sudden. Her sun went down at noon. And all her wealth and grandeur, pomp and power, did but aggravate her ruin, and make it the more grievous to herself, and astonishing to all about her. Now observe here, 1. How the ruin of Tyre will be brought about, v. 26. Some of the greatest and greatest things are split or sunk by the misdirection of her steersmen; Thy rowers have themselves brought thee into great and dangerous waters; the governors of the city, and those that had the management of their public affairs, by some miscalculation or other involved them in that war with the Chaldeans, which was the ruin of their state; by their insobriety, some affright given to the Chaldeans, or some attempt made upon them, in confidence of their own ability to contend with them, they provoked Nebuchadnezzar to make a descent upon them, and, by their obstinacy in standing it out to the last, enraged him to that degree, that he determined the ruin of their state; and, like an east wind, broke them in the midst of the seas. Note, It is ill with a people when those who are called to sit at the helm, instead of putting them into the harbour, run them aground. 2. How great and general the ruin will be. All her wealth shall be buried with her, her riches, her fairs, and her merchandise; (v. 27.) all that had any dependence upon her, and dealings with her, in trade, in war, in conversation, they shall all fall with her into the midst of the seas, in the day of her ruin. Note, Those who make creatures their confidence, place their happiness in their interest in them, and rest their hopes upon them, will of course fall with them; happy therefore are they that have the God of Jacob for their Help, and whose hope is in the Lord their God, who lives for ever. 3. What sad lamentation would be made for the destruction of Tyre. The pilots, her princes and governors, when they see how ill they have conducted themselves, and how much they have contributed to their own ruin, shall cry out so loud as to make even the suburbs shake; (v. 28.) such a vexation shall it be to them to reflect upon their own bad conduct. The inferior officers, that were as the mariners of the state, shall be forced to come down from their respective posts, (v. 29.) and they shall cry out against their governors, they shall be deceived, they shall not prophesy well able to hold out what thou hast been; they shall cry bitterly for the common ruin, and their own share in it. They shall use all the most solemn expressions of grief; they shall cast dust on their heads, in indignation against themselves, shall wallow themselves in ashes, as having bid a final farewell to all ease and pleasure; they shall make their bald heads bald (v. 31.) with tearing their hair; and, according to the custom of great mourners, they shall gird themselves with sackcloth, who used to wear fine linen; and, instead of merry songs, they shall weep with bitterness of heart. Note, Losses and crosses are very grievous, and hard to be borne, to those that have long been wallowing in pleasure, and sleeping in carnal security. 4. How Tyre should be upbraided with her former honour and prosperity; (v. 32, 33.) she that was Tyre the renowned, shall now be called Tyre, the destroyed to the midst of the sea. "What city is like Tyre? Did ever any city come down from such a height of prosperity to such a depth of adversity? Time was, when thy wares, those of thine own making, and those that passed through thy hands, went forth out of the seas, and were exported to all parts of the world; then thou filledst many
people, and didst enrich the kings of the earth and their kingdoms. The Tyrians, though they bore much sway in trade, were yet, it seems, fair merchants, and let their neighbours not only live, but thrive, by them. All that dealt with them, were gainers; they did not cheat or oppress the people, but did enrich them with the multitude of their merchandise. "But now they that used to be enriched by thee, shall be ruined with thee;" (as is usual in trade,) when once thou shalt be broken, and all that is seised, all thy company shall fall too." v. 34. There is an end of Tyre, that made such a noise and bustle in the world. This great blaze goes out in a smuff.

5. How the fall of Tyre should be matter of terror to some, and laughter to others, according to which they were differently interested and affected. Some shall be sore afraid, and shall be troubled, (v. 35.) concluding it will be their own turn to fall next. Others shall hiss at her, (v. 36.) shall ridicule her pride and vanity, and bad conduct, and think her ruin just. She triumphed in Jerusalem's fall, and there are those that will triumph in hers. When God casts his judgments on the sinner, men also shall clap their hands at him, and shall hiss him out of his place, Job xxxvii. 22, 23. Is this the city which men called the perfection of beauty?

CHAP. XXVIII.

In this chapter, we have, I. A prediction of the fall and ruin of the king of Tyre, who, in the destruction of that city, is particularly set up as a mark for God's arrows, v. 1–10. II. A lamentation for the king of Tyre, when he is thus fallen, though he falls by his own iniquity, v. 11–19. III. A prophecy of the destruction of Zion, which was in the neighbourhood of Tyre, and had a dependence upon it, v. 20–23. IV. A promise of the restoration of the Israel of God, though in the day of their calamity they were insulted over by their neighbours, v. 24–26.

1. THE word of the Lord came again unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, say unto the prince of Tyrus, Thus saith the Lord God, Because thy heart is lifted up, and thou hast said, I am a god, I sit in the seat of God, in the midst of the seas; yet thou art a man, and not God, though thou set thy heart as the heart of God: 3. Behold, thou art wiser than Daniel; there is no secret that they can hide from thee: 4. With thy wisdom and with thine understanding hast thou gotten thee riches, and hast gotten gold and silver into thy treasures: 5. By thy great wisdom, and by thy traffic, hast thou increased thy riches, and thy heart is lifted up because of thy riches: 6. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Because thou hast set thy heart as the heart of God; 7. Behold, therefore, I will bring strangers upon thee, the terrible of the nations: and they shall draw their swords against the beauty of thy wisdom, and they shall defile thy brightness. 8. They shall bring thee down to the pit, and thou shalt die the deaths of them that are slain in the midst of the seas. 9. wilt thou yet say before him that slayeth thee, I am God? but thou shalt be a man, and no god, in the hand of him that slayeth thee. 10. Thou shalt die the deaths of the uncircumcised by the hand of strangers: for I have spoken it, saith the Lord God.

We had done with Tyrus in the foregoing chapter, but now the prince of Tyre is to be singled out from the rest; here is something to be said to him by himself; a message to him from God, which the prophet must send him, whether he will hear or whether he will forbear.

1. He must tell him of his pride. His people were proud, (ch. xxvii. 3.) and so is he; and they shall both be made to know that God resists the proud. Let him hear it.

1. What were the expressions of his pride? His heart was lifted up, v. 2. He had a great conceit of himself, was blown up with an opinion of his own sufficiency, and looked with disdain upon all about him; out of the abundance of the pride of his heart, he said, I am a god: he did not only say it in his heart, but had the impudence to speak it out. God has said of princes, They are gods; (Ps. lxxxix. 6.) but it does not become them to say so of themselves; it is a high affront to him who is God alone, and will not give his glory to another. He thought that the city of Tyre had as necessary a dependence upon him as the world has upon the God that made it; and that he was himself independent as God, and unaccountable to any. He thought himself to have wealth and good luck, both as God himself and as a great benefactor to the world. Thus the king of Babylonia said, I will be like the Most High, (Isa. xlv. 11,) just like the Most High. I will be like the strange God, and therefore will not be easily traduced, because I cannot be controlled. I sit in the seat of God; I sit as high as God, my throne equal with his. Divinum imperium cum Jove Caesar habeb.—Cesar divides dominion with Jove. I sit as safe as God, as safe in the heart of the seas, and as far out of the reach of danger, as he in the height of heaven. He thinks his guards of men and of the hosts of angels that are about the throne of God. He is put in mind of his meanness and mortality, and, since he needs to be told, he shall be told, that self-evident truth, Thou art a man, and not God, a depending creature, a dying creature; thou art flesh, and not spirit, Isa. xxvi. 3. Note, Men must be made to know that they are but men, Ps. ix. 20. The greatest wits, the greatest potentates, the greatest set of men, are men, and not gods; Jesus Christ was both God and man. The king of Tyre, though he has such a mighty influence upon all about him, and with the help of his riches bears a mighty sway, though he has tribute and presents brought to his court with as much devotion as if they were sacrifices to his altar, though he is flattered by his courtiers, and made a god by his poets, yet he is a man; he is not God, he knows it; he says it; but he sets his heart as the heart of God; "Thou hast concieved thyself to be a god, hast compared thyself with God, thinking thyself as wise and strong and as fit to govern the world, as he." It was the ruin of our first parents, and ours in them, that they would be as gods, Gen. iii. 5. And still that corrupt nature which inclines men to set up themselves in their own wisdom and not to own what they are, to have what they will, to live to themselves, and their own felicity, to enjoy themselves, sets their hearts as the heart of God, invades his prerogatives, and catches at the flowers of his crown—a presumption that cannot go unpunished.
We are here told what it was that he was proud of. 

1. His wisdom. It is probable that this prince was a man of very good natural parts, a philosopher, and well read in all the parts of learning that were then in vogue, at least, a politician, and one that had great dexterity in managing the affairs of state. And then he thought himself 

wiser than Daniel, v. 3. We find, before, that Daniel, though now but a young man, was celebrated for his prevails in prayer, ch. xiv. 14. Here, we find he was famous for his wisdom. It was the modification of the affairs of this world, a great scholar and statesman, and with a great saint; and yet not a prince, but a poor captive. It was strange that under such external disadvantages his lustre should shine forth, so that he was become wise to a proverb. When the king of Tyre dreams himself to be a god, he says, I am wiser than Daniel. There is no secret that they can hide from thee. Probably, he challenged all about him to prove him with questions, as Solomon was proved, and he had unriddled all their enigmas, had solved all their problems, and none of them all could puzzle him: he had perhaps been successful in discovering plots, and diving into the councils of the neighboring princes; and therefore thought himself omniscient, and that nothing could be held hidden from him. Therefore he said, I am a god, 

Note, Knowledge puffeth up; it is hard to know much and not to know it too well, and to be elevated with it. He that was wiser than Daniel, was prouder than Lucifer. Those therefore that are knowing must study to be humble, and to evidence that they are so. 

2. His wealth. That way his wisdom led him: it is not said that by his wisdom he searched into the affairs of state or government, meddled the state better as it was, or made better laws, or had advanced the interests of the commonwealth of learning; but his wisdom and understanding were of use to him in traffic. As some of the kings of Judah loved husbandry, (2 Chron. xxvi. 10.) so the king of Tyre loved merchandise, and by it he got riches, increased his riches, and filled his treasuries with gold and silver, and given his merchantmen great power to get wealth, (Ecc. viii. 17, 18.) 2. [2] That he therefore thought himself a wise man, because he was a rich man; whereas a fool may have an estate, (Ecc. ii. 19.) yea, and a fool may get an estate, for the world has been often observed to favour such, when bread is not to the wise, Ecc. ix. 11. 

3. That his heart was lifted up because of his riches; for the increase of his wealth, which made him so haughty and confident of his own wisdom and power, that he set his heart as the heart of God. The man of sin, when he had a great deal of worldly pomp and power, showed himself as a god, 2 Thess. ii. 4. Those who are rich in this world, have therefore need to charge themselves with, which the word of God charges upon them, that they be not high-minded, 1 Tim. vi. 17. 

A man goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall, he must tell him of that destruction, of that fall, which was now hastening on, as the just punishment of his presumption in setting up himself a rival with God. 

"Because thou hast pretended to be a god, (v. 6.) therefore thou shalt not be long a man," v. 7. Observe here, 

1. The instruments of his destruction, I will bring strangers upon thee—the Chaldeans, whom we do not find mentioned among the many nations and countries that traded with Tyre, ch. 27. If any of these nations had been brought against it, they would have had some compassion upon it for old acquaintance sake; but these strangers will have none; they are people of a strange language, which the king of Tyre himself, wise as he is, perhaps under understands not. They are the terrible of the nations; it was an army made up of many nations, and it was at this time the most formidable both for strength and fury. These God has at command, and these bring him into his way. 

2. The extremity of the destruction; They shall draw their swords against the beauty of thy wisdom, v. 7. against all those things which they gloried in as thy beauty, and the production of thy wisdom. Note, It is just with God that our enemies should make that their prey which we have made our pride. The king of Tyre's palace, his treasure, his city, his navy, his army, these he gloried in as his brightness, these, he thinks, make him illustrious and glorious as a god on earth. But all these the victorious enemy shall defile, shall deface, shall destroy; he thought them sacred, things that none durst touch; but the conquerors shall seize them as common spoil, and spit the brightness of them. But, whatever comes of what he has, surely his person is to be an object of ridicule; therefore he said, Then shall I be 

Note, Though things are suitably ordered to be broken in pieces, yet it is hard to have an humble and reasonable answer to the forced change of things. It is a thing full of treachery, to bring to pass any of the extremities of distress, and of the destruction of human affairs. 

The king of Tyre is the most haughty and supercilious of all the nations; let this, then, be an example to none of the pride of success and prosperity take to itself, and will put it to the shame of itself. It is not enough to be just, but must be proud and haughty; it is not enough to get wealth and power, but must be a haughty and proud spirit; it is not enough to be rich, but must be proud and haughty. 

11. Moreover, the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, 12. Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyre, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord God, Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. 13. Thou hast
been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created. 14. Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou wast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. 15. Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee. 16. By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God; and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. 17. Thy heart was lifted up because of thy beauty; thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee. 18. Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity of thy traffic; therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee; and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth, in the sight of all that behold thee. 19. All they that know thee among the people shall be astonished at thee: thou shalt be a terror, and never shalt thou be any more.

As after the prediction of the ruin of Tyre (ch. xxvi.) followed a pathetic lamentation for its (ch. xxvii.) so after the ruin of the king of Tyre is foretold, it is bewailed.

1. This is commonly understood of the present prince of Tyre, spoken to, v. 2. His name was Ezibaal, or Ithabulus, as Diodorus Siculus calls him, that was king of Tyre when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed it. He was, it seems, upon all external accounts, an accomplished man, very great and famous; but his iniquity was his ruin. Many expositors have suggested, that beside the literal sense of this lamentation there is an allegory in it, and that it is an allusion to the fall of the angels that sinned, who updid themselves by their pride. And (as is usual in texts that have a mystical meaning) some passages here refer primarily to the king of Tyre, as that of his inferiors, others to the angels, as that of being in the holy mountain of God. But if there be any thing mystical in it, (as perhaps there may,) I shall rather refer it to the fall of Adam, which seems to be glanced at, (v. 13.) Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God, and that in the day thou wast created.

Some think that by the king of Tyre is meant the whole royal family, this including also the foregoing kings, and looking as far back as Hiram king of Tyre. The present governor is called prince; (v. 2.) but he that is here lamented is called king. The court of Tyre and its kings had for many ages been famous, but sins ruins it. Now we may observe two things here:

1. What was the renown of the king of Tyre. He is here spoken of as having lived in great splendour, v. 12.-15. He was a man: but it is here owned that he was a very considerable man, and one that made a mark among men, and stood out in his day. He excelled other men; Hiram and other kings of Tyre had done so in their time; and the present king perhaps had not come short of any of them: Thou seest up the sun full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty: both the powers of human nature and the prosperity of human life, seemed in him to have been at the highest pitch. He was looked upon to be as wise as all the sages, and his counsels could make him, and as happy as the wealth of this world and his enjoyment of it could make him; in him you might see the utmost that both could do; and therefore seal up the sun, for nothing can be added; he is a complete man, perfect in suo generi—in his kind. (2.) He seemed to be as wise and happy as Adam in innocence; (v. 13.) Thou hast been in Eden, even in the garden of God: thou hast lived as it were in paradise all thy days, hast had a full enjoyment of everything that is good for food or pleasant to the eyes; and an uncontroverted dominion over all about thee, as Adam had.” One instance of the magnificence of the king of Tyre, is, that he outdid all other princes in jewels, which those have the most plenty of that trade most abroad, as he did; Every precious stone of thine, saith God, is; There is a great variety of precious stones; but he had more and more plenty, that, beside what were treasured up in his cabinet, and were the ornaments of his crown, he had his clothes trimmed with them; they were his covering: now, (v. 14.) he walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire, these precious stones, which glittered and sparkled like fire. His rooms were in a manner set round with jewels, so that he walked in the midst of the stones of fire. Thus did he court himself as glorious as if, like God, he had been surrounded by so many angels, who are compared to a flame of fire. And if he be such an admirer of precious stones as to think them as bright as angels, no wonder that he is such an admirer of himself, as to think himself as great as God. Nine several sorts of precious stones are here named, which were all in the High Priest’s ephod; then follow they are particularly named, because he, in his palace, was to speak particularly of them, and tell those about him, with a great deal of foolish pleasure. “This is such a precious stone: of such a value, and so and so are its virtues.” Thus is he bruited with his vanity. Gold is mentioned last, as far inferior in value to these precious stones; and he used to speak of it accordingly. Another thing that made him think his palace a paradise, was, the curious music he had, the tabrets and pipes, hand instruments and wind instruments; the workmanship of these was extraordinary, and they were prepared for him on purpose; prepared in thee, the pronoun is feminine, in thee, O Tyre; or it denotes that the king was effeminate in doing on such things. They were prepared in the day he was created, (v. 16.) he walked in the midst of the stones of fire, and walked in the midst of the stones of fire; he was made on purpose to celebrate the joys either of his birth-day or of his coronation-day. These he prides himself much in, and would have all that came to see his palace take notice of them. (3.) He looked like an incarnate angel; (v. 14.) Thou art the anointed cherub that covers or protects; that is, he looked upon himself as a guardian angel, and in his palace as bright as angels, and pointed to his office, and qualified for it; anointed kings should be to their subjects as anointed cherubim, that cover them with the wings of their power; when they are such, God will own them; their advancement was from him; I have set thee so. Some think, because mention was made of Eden, that it refers to the cherub set on the east of Eden to cover
it, Gen. iii. 24. He thought himself as able to guard his city from all invaders as that angel was for his charge. Or, it may refer to the cherubim in the most holy place, whose wings covered the ark; he thought himself as bright as one of them. 4. He appeared in as much splendour as the High Priest when he was clothed with his garments for glory and beauty, upon his ephod, as a type of God, as president of the temple built on that holy mountain; thou didst look as great, and with as much majesty and authority, as ever the High Priest did when he walked in the temple, which was garnished with precious stones, (2 Chron. iii. 6.) and had his habit on, which had precious stones both in the breast and on the shoulders; in that he seemed more splendid than any of the midst of the stones of fire. Thus glorious is the king of Tyre; at least, he thinks himself so.

2. Let us now see what was the ruin of the king of Tyre, what it was that stained his glory, and had all this honour in the dust; (v. 15.) "Thou wast perfect in thy ways; thou didst prosper in all thy affairs, and everything went well with thee; thou hadst not only a clear, but a bright reputation, from the day thou wast created, the day of thine accession to the throne, till iniquity was found in thee; and that spoiled all." This may perhaps allude to the deplorable case of the angels that fell, and of our first parents, who were perfect in their ways till iniquity was found in them. And when iniquity was once found in him it increased, he grew worse and worse, and grew more and more set on to do evil. He increased in iniquity; he was more and more disposed to sin, and more and more corrupt; his precious stones were defiled, and so exposed thyself by the multitude of thine iniquities." Now observe,

1. What the iniquity was that was the ruin of the king of Tyre. 1. The iniquity of his traffic; (v. 16.) "Thou hast sold thy people, their sin is charged upon him, because he connived at it, and set them a bad example; (v. 16.) By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thus thou hast sinned. The king had so much to do with his merchandise, and was so wholly intent upon the gains of that, that he took no care to do justice, to right things, and to prevent violence; for in the multiplicity of business, wrong was done to many by oversight; and in his dealings he made use of his power to invade the rights of those he dealt with. Note, Those that have much to do in the world, are in great danger of doing much amiss; and it is hard to deal with many without violence to some. Trades are called mysteries; but too many make mysteries of iniquity."

2. His pride and vainglory; (v. 17.) "Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty; thou wast in love with thyself, and thy own shadow. And thus thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of the brightness, the pomp and splendour, wherein thou livedst. He gazed so much upon this, that it dazzled his eyes, and prevented him from seeing his way. He appeared so puffed up with his greatness, that it bereaved him both of his wisdom, and of the reputation of it. He really became a fool in glorying. Those make a bad bargain for themselves, that part with their wisdom for the gratifying of their gaiety, and, to please a vain humour, lose a real excellency.

3. What the ruin was, that this iniquity brought him to. 1. He was thrown out of his dignity, and dislodged from his palace, which he took to be his paradise and temple; (v. 16.) "I will cast thee as firefanie out of the mountain of God." His kingly power was high as a mountain, setting him above others; it was a mountain of God, for the powers that be are ordained of God, and have something in them that is sacred; but, having abused his power, he is reckoned profane, and is therefore deposed and expelled; he disgraces the crown he wears, and so has forfeited it, and shall be destroyed from the midst of the stones of fire, the precious stones with which his palace was garnished, as the temple was; and they shall be no protection to him."

2. He was exposed to contempt and disgrace, and trampled upon by his neighbours; I will cast thee among the pavement-stones, from the midst of the precious stones, and will lay thee a ruinful spectacle before kings, that they may behold thee, and take warning by thee to be proud and oppressive." (v. 3.) He was quite consumed by his city, and by it; I will bring forth a fire from the midst of thee. The conquerors, when they have plundered the city, will kindle a fire in the heart of it, which shall lay it, and the palace particularly, in ashes. Or, it may be taken more generally, for the fire of God's judgments, which shall devour both prince and people, and bring all the glory of both to ashes upon the earth; and should thus be brought forth from the midst of thee. All God's judgments upon sinners take rise from themselves; they are devoured by a fire of their own kindling. (v. 4.) He was hereby made a terrible example of divine vengeance. Thus he is reduced in the sight of all them that behold him; (v. 18.) They that knew him shall be astonished at him, and shall wonder how one that stood so high could be brought so low. The king of Tyre's palace, like the temple at Jerusalem when it was destroyed, shall be an astonishment and a hissing. (v. 21.) So fell the king of Tyre.

20. Again the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, 21. Son of man, set thy face against Zidon, and prophesy against it, 22. And say, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I am against thee, O Zidon; and I will be glorified in the midst of thee: and they shall know that I am the Lord, when I have executed judgments in her, and shall be sanctified in her. 23. For I will send into her pestilence, and blood into her streets; and the wounded shall be judged in the midst of her by the sword upon her on every side; and they shall know that I am the Lord. 24. And there shall be no more a pricking brier unto the house of Israel, nor any grieving thorn of all that are round about them, that despised them; and they shall know that I am the Lord God. 25. Thus saith the Lord God, When I shall have gathered the house of Israel from the people among whom they are scattered, and shall be sanctified in them in the sight of the heathen, then shall they dwell in their land that I have given to my servant Jacob. 26. And they shall dwell safely therein, and shall build houses, and plant vineyards; yea, they shall dwell with confidence, when I have executed judgments upon all those that despise them round about them; and they shall know that I am the Lord their God.
God's glory is his great end, both in all the good and in all the evil which proceed out of the mouth of the Most High; so we find in these verses,

1. God will be glorified in the destruction of Zidon, a city that lay near to Tyre, was more ancient, but not so considerable, had a dependence upon it, and stood and fell with it. God says here, I am against thee, O Zidon, and I will be glorified in the whirl of thee, v. 32. And again, Thy mouth, which would not know by gentler methods, shall be made to know that I am the Lord, and I alone, and that I am a just and jealous God, when I shall have executed judgments in her, destroying judgments, when I shall have done execution according to justice, and according to the sentence passed; and so shall be sanctified in her. The Zidonians, it seems, were more addicted to idolatry than the Tyrians were; who, being men of business and large conversation, were less under the power of bigotry and superstition; the Zidonians were noted for the worship of Ashtaroth. Solomon introduced it, 1 Kings xi. 4. Jezebel was daughter to the king of Zidon, who brought the worship of Baal into Israel; (1 Kings xxi. 31.) so that God had been much dishonoured by the Zidonians. Now, says he, I will be glorified in the whirl of thee, Zidon; you shall be borderers upon the land of Israel, where God was known, and where they might have got the knowledge of him, and have learned to glorify him; but, instead of that, they seduced Israel to the worship of their idols. Note, When God is sanctified, he is glorified; for his holiness is his glory; and those whom he is not sanctified and glorified by, he will be sanctified and glorified upon, by executing judgments upon them, which speak him a just Avenger of his own and his people's injured honour.

The judgments that shall be executed upon Zidon are, war and pestilence, two wasting, depopulating judgments, v. 23. They are God's messengers which he sends on his errands, and they shall accomplish that for which he sends them. Pestilence and blood shall be sent into her streets; there the dead bodies of these shall lie, who perished, some by the plague, occasioned perhaps through ill diet when the city was besieged, and some by the sword of the enemy, most likely the Chaldean armies, when the city was taken, and all were put to the sword. Thus the wounded shall be judged; when they are dying of their wounds, they shall judge themselves, and others shall say, They justly fall; or, as some read it, They shall be punished by those who, with that sword, which was a commission to destroy every side, it is God that judges, and he will overcome.

Nor is it Tyre and Zidon only on which God would execute judgments, but on all those that despised his people Israel, and triumphed in their calamities; for this was now God's controversy with the nations that were round about them, v. 26. Note, When God's people are under his correcting, humbling, and abasing plagues, it is a trial to discern men, and see who are the excelling men, who were scarred that they shall not seem vile to those that are about them, and therefore takes it ill of those who despise them, and so help, forward the affliction when he is but a little displeased, Zech. i. 13. God regards them even in their low estate; and therefore let not men despise them.

God will be glorified in the restoration of his people to their former safety and prosperity. God had been dishonoured by the sins of his people, and their sufferings too had given occasion to the enemy to blaspheme; (Isa. lii. 5.) but God will now both cure them of their sins, and ease them of their troubles, and so will be sanctified in them in the sight of the heathen, will recover the honour of his holiness, to the satisfaction of all the world, v. 25.

(1.) They shall return to the possession of their own land again; I will gather the house of Israel out of their dispersions, in answer to that prayer, (Ps. civ. 47.) Save us, O Lord our God, and gather us from among the heathen; and in pursuance of that promise, (Deut. xxx. 4.) Thence will the Lord thy God gather thee. Being gathered, they shall be brought in a body, to dwell in the land that I have given them. This is a long, solemn, slow process, an ancient grant, in bringing them back, for that remained in force, and the discontinuance of the possession was not a defeature of the right. He gave it, will again give it.

(2.) They shall enjoy great tranquillity there. When those that had been vexations to them are taken off, they shall live in quietness; there shall be no more a Dining bristle, or a grieving thorn, v. 24. They shall have a happy soul apparel, and shall build houses, and plant vineyards; and they shall enjoy a happy security and serenity there; they shall dwell safely, shall dwell with confidence, and there shall be none to disquiet them, or make them afraid, v. 26. This never had a full accomplishment in the body of that people, for after their return out of captivity, they were ever and anon molested by some hard, unpitiful or eager. Now, as in the gospel-church been ever quite free from prickling bristles and grieving thorns; yet sometimes the church has rest; believers always dwell safely under the divine protection, and may be quiet from the fear of evil. But the full accomplishment of this promise is reserved for the heavenly Canaan, when all the saints shall be gathered together, and every thing that offends shall be removed, and all griefs and fears for ever banished.

CHAP. XXIX.

Three chapters we had concerning Tyre and its king, next follow four chapters concerning Egypt and its king. This is the first of them. Egypt is here formed into a nation of bondmen, and God's people of late had had but too friendly a correspondence with it, and had depended too much upon it; and therefore, whether the prediction reached Egypt or no, it would be of use to Israel, to take them off from their confidence in their alliance with it. The prophets against Egypt, which are all laid together in these four chapters, were of five several dates; the first in the tenth year of the captivity; (v. 1.) the second in the twelfth year; (v. 12.) the third in the eleventh year, and the first month; (ch. xxx. 20.) the fourth in the eleventh year, and the third month; (ch. xxxi. 1.) the fifth in the twelfth year; (ch. xxxii. 1.) and another in the twelfth year, (ch. xxxiii. 1.) of this chapter, we have, 1. The destruction of Pharaoh foreshadowed, for his dealing deceitfully with Israel, v. 1., 7. II. The desolation of the land of Egypt foretold, v. 8., 12. III. A promise of the restoration thereof, in part, after forty years, v. 13., 16. IV. The possession that should be given to Nehuchadnezzar of the land of Egypt, v. 17., 20. V. A promise of mercy to Israel, v. 21.

1. In the tenth year, in the tenth month, in the twelfth day of the month, the word of the Lord came unto me, saying,

2. Son of man, set thy face against Pharaoh king of Egypt, and prophesy against him, and against all Egypt: 3. Speak, and say, Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I am against thee, Pharaoh king of Egypt, the great dragon that lieth in the midst of his rivers, which hath said, My river is mine own, and I have made it for myself. 4. But I will put hooks in thy jaws, and I will cause the fish of thy rivers to stick unto thy scales; and I will bring thee up out of the midst of thy rivers, and all the fish of thy
rivers shall stick unto thy scales. 5. And I will leave thee thrown into the wilderness, thee and all the fish of thy rivers: thou shalt fall upon the open fields; thou shalt not be brought together, nor gathered: I have given thee for meat to the beasts of the field and to the fowls of the heaven. 6. And all the inhabitants of Egypt shall know that I am the Lord, because they have been a staff of reed to the house of Israel. 7. When they took hold of thee by the hand, thou didst break, and rend all their shoulder: and when they leaned upon thee thou brakest, and madest all their loins to be at a stand.

Here is,

I. The date of this prophecy against Egypt. It was in the tenth year of the captivity, and yet it is placed after the prophecy against Tyre, which was delivered in the eleventh year, because in the accomplishment of the prophecies, the destruction of Tyre happened before the destruction of Egypt, and Nebuchadnezzar gaining Egypt was the reward of his service against Tyre. Therefore the prophecy against Tyre is put first, that we may the better observe that. But particular notice must be taken of this, that the first prophecy against Egypt was just at the time when the king of Egypt was coming to relieve Jerusalem, and raise the siege, (Jer. xxxvii. 5.) but did not answer the expectations of the Jews from them. Note, It is good to foresee the falling of our creature-creedences, then when we are most in temptation to depend upon them; that we may cease from man.

II. The scope of this prophecy. It is directed against Pharaoh king of Egypt, and against all Egypt, v. 2. The prophecy against Tyre began with the people, and then proceeded against the prince. But this begins with the prince, because it begins to have its accomplishment in the insurrections and rebellions of the people against the prince, not long after this.

III. The prophecy itself. Pharaoh Hophrah (for so was the present Pharaoh surnamed) is here represented by a great dragon, or crocodile, that lies in the midst of his rivers, as Leviathan in the waters, to play therein, v. 3. Niles, the river of Egypt, was famed for crocodiles. And what is the king of Egypt, in God's account, but a great dragon, venomous and mischievous? Therefore says God, I am against thee, I am above thee, so it may be read. How high sorer the princes and potentates of the earth are, there is a higher than they, (Ecc. v. 8.) a God above them, that can control them, and if they be tyrannical and oppressive, a God against them, that will be free to reckon with them. Observe here,

1. The pride and security of Pharaoh. He lies in the midst of his rivers, rolls himself with a great deal of satisfaction in his wealth and pleasures; and he says, My river is my own: he boasts that he is an absolute prince, his subjects are his vassals, Joseph bought them long ago, Gen. xlvii. 25. That he is a sole prince, and has neither partner in government, nor competition for it; that he is out of debt, what he has is his own, and none of his neighbours have any demands upon him; that he is independent, neither tributary nor accountable to any. Note, Worldly, carnal minds please themselves with, and pride themselves in, their property, forgetting that whatever we have, we have only the use of it, the property is in God; we ourselves are not our own, but his; our tongues are not our own, Ps. xii. 4. Our river is not our own, for its springs are not in God. They are not his; hence can he, and as what he has, his own, for though it be so againsts all the world, it is not so against God. But Pharaoh's reason for his pretensions is yet more absurd; My river is my own, for I have made it for myself. Here he usurps two of the divine prerogatives, to be the author, and the end, of his own being and felicity. He only that is the great Creator, can say of this world, and of every thing in it, it is made for myself. He calls his river his own, because he looks not unto the Maker thereof, nor has respect unto him that fashioned it long ago, Isa. xxi. 11. What we have, we have received from God, and must use for God, so that we cannot say, We made it, much less, We made it for ourselves; and why then do we boast? Note, Self is the great idol that all the world worships, in contempt of God and his sovereignty.

2. The course God will take with this proud man, to humble him. He is a great dragon in the waters, and God will accordingly deal with him, v. 4, 5. (1.) He will draw him out of his rivers, for he has a hook and a cord for this levithan, with which he can manage him, though none on earth can; (Job xli. 1.) I will bring thee up out of the midst of the rivers; we can at last cast thee out of thy kingdom, out of all those things in which thou takest such a complacency, and placest such a confidence. Herodotus relates of this Pharaoh, who was now king of Egypt, that he had reigned in great prosperity for twenty-five years, and was so elevated with his successes, that he said, God himself cannot cast me out of his kingdom; but he shall soon be convinced of his mistake, and what he depended on shall be no defence. God can force men out of that in which they are most secure and easy. (2.) All his fish shall be drawn out with him, his servants, his soldiers, and all that had a dependence on him, as he thought, but really such as he had dependence upon; these shall stick to his scales, adhere to their king, resolving to live and die with him. But, (3.) The king and his army, the dragon, and all the fish that stick to his scales, shall perish together, as fish cast upon dry ground, and shall be meat to the beasts and fowls, v. 5. Now this is supposed to have its accomplishment soon after, when this Pharaoh, in defence of Arcius king of Libya, who had been expelled his kingdom by the Cyrenians, levied a great army, and went out against the Cyrenians, to recover it from his friend, but was defeated in battle, and all his forces put to flight, which gave each disgust to his kingdom, that they rose in rebellion against him. Thus was he left thrown into the wilderness, he and all the fish of the river with him. Thus issue men's pride and presumption and carnal security. Thus men justly lose what they call their own under God, when they call it their own against him. The controversy God has with the Egyptians; it is because they have cheated his people, they encouraged them to expect relief and assistance from them when they were in distress, but failed them; (v. 6, 7.) because they have been a staff of reed to the house of Israel. They pretended to be a staff for them to lean upon, but when any occasion did arise, they were too proud, they were too big for work, and could not, or treacherous and would not, do that for them that was expected. They broke under them, to their great disappointment and amazement, so that they rent their shoulder, and made all their loins to be at a stand. The king of Egypt, it is probable, had encouraged Zedickiah to break his league with the king of Babylon, with a promise that he would stand by him, which when he failed to do to any purpose, it could not but put
them into a great conformation. God had told them, long since, that the Egyptians were broken reeds; (Isa. xxx, 6, 7.) Rabshakeh had told them so; (Isa. xxxvi. 6.) and now they found it so. It was indeed the folly of Israel to trust them, and they were well enough served when they were deceived in them. God was righteous in suffering them to be so. But that is no excuse at all for the Egyptians' falsehood and treachery, nor shall it secure them from the judgments of that God who is, and will be, the Avenger of all such wrongs. It is a great sin, and very provoking to God, as well as unjust, ungrateful, and very dishonourable and unkind, to put a Cheat upon those that put a confidence in us.

3. Therefore thus saith the Lord God: Behold, I will bring a sword upon thee, and cut off man and beast out of thee. 9. And the land of Egypt shall be desolate and waste; and they shall know that I am the Lord: because he hath said, The river is mine, and I have made it. 10. Behold, therefore, I am against thee, and against thy rivers, and I will make the land of Egypt utterly waste and desolate, from the tower of Syene even unto the border of Ethiopia.

11. No foot of man shall pass through it, nor foot of beast shall pass through it, neither shall it be inhabited forty years. 12. And I will make the land of Egypt desolate in the midst of the countries that are desolate, and her cities among the cities that are laid waste shall be desolate forty years: and I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and will disperse them through the countries. 13. Yet thus saith the Lord God: At the end of forty years will I gather the Egyptians from the people whither they were scattered: 14. And I will bring again the captivity of Egypt, and I will cause them to return into the land of Pathros, into the land of their habitation; and they shall be there a base kingdom. 15. It shall be the basest of the kingdoms; neither shall it exalt itself any more above the nations: for I will diminish them, that they shall no more rule over the nations. 16. And it shall be no more the confidence of the house of Israel, which bringeth their iniquity to remembrance, when they shall look after them: but they shall know that I am the Lord God.

This explains the foregoing prediction, which was figurative, and looks something further. Here is a prophecy.

1. Of the ruin of Egypt. The threatening of this is very full and particular; and the sin for which this ruin shall be brought upon them, is, their pride, v. 9. They said, The river is mine, and I have made it; therefore their land shall spue them out. (1.) God is against them, both against the king and against the people, against thee and against thy rivers; waters signify people and multitudes, Rev. xvii. 15. (2.) Multitudes of them shall be cut off by the sword of war, a sword which God will bring upon them, to destroy both man and beast, the sword of a civil war. (3.) The country shall be despopulated. The land of Egypt shall be desolate and waste, and the cities not inhabited; the wealth of both was their pride, and that God will take away. It shall be utterly waste; wastes of waste, (so the margin reads it,) and desolate; (v. 10.) neither men nor beasts shall pass through it, nor shall it be inhabited, (v. 11.) it shall be desolate in the midst of the countries that are so, v. 12. This was the effect not so much of these things spoken of before, which were made by them, but of the war which the king of Babylon made upon them. It shall be desolate from one end of the land to the other, from the tower of Syene even unto the border of Ethiopia. The sin of pride is enough to ruin a whole nation. (4.) The people shall be dispersed and scattered among the nations, (v. 12.) so that they who thought the balance of power was in their hands, should now become a contemptible people. Such a fall does a haughty spirit go before.

2. Of the restoration of Egypt after awhile, v. 13. Egypt shall lie desolate forty years, (v. 12.) and then I will bring again the captivity of Egypt, v. 14. Some date the forty years from Nebuchadnezzar's destroying Egypt, others from the desolation of Egypt some time before; however, they end not there the year of the seventy years' captivity of Judah ended, or soon after. Then this prediction was accomplished. (1.) That God will gather the Egyptians out of all the countries into which they were dispersed, and make them to return to the land of their habitation, and give them a settlement there again, v. 14. Note, Though God will find out a way to humble the proud, yet the lot will not always be for ever, nor with them in this world. (2.) That yet they shall not make a figure again as they have done. Egypt shall be a kingdom again, but it shall be the basest of the kingdoms, (v. 15.) it shall have but little wealth and power, and shall not extend its conquests as formerly; shall be the tail of the nations, and not the head. It is a mercy that it shall become a kingdom again, but, to humble it, it shall be a despicable kingdom; it shall not stand things for ever, and recover any thing like its ancient lustre. For two reasons it shall be thus mortified.

[1.] That it may not dominate over its neighbours, that it may not exact itself above the nations, nor rule over the nations, as it has done, but that it may know what it is to be low and despised. Note, Those who abuse their power will justly be stripped of it; and God, as King of nations, will find out a way to maintain the injured rights and liberties, not only of his own, but of other nations.

[2.] That it may not deceive the people of God; (v. 16.) It shall no more be the confidence of the house of Israel; they shall no more be in temptation to trust in it as they have done, which is a sin that brings iniquity to remembrance, that is, provokes God to punish the iniquity both in Israel and all their other sins. Or, it puts them in mind of their idolatries, to return to them, when they look to the idolaters, to repose a confidence in them. Note, The creatures we confide in are often therefore ruined, because there is no other way effectually to cure us of our confidence in them. Rather than Israel shall be ensured again, the whole land of Egypt shall be laid waste. He that once pressed Egypt for their ransom, (Isa. xliii. 5.) will now give Egypt for their curse; and it shall be destroyed rather than Israel shall not in this particular be reformed. God, not only in justice, but in wisdom and goodness to us, breaks those creature-stays which we lean too much upon; and makes them to be no more, that they may be no more our confidence.
17. And it came to pass in the seven and twentieth year, in the first month, in the first

| day of the month, the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, 18. Son of man, Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon caused his army to serve a great service against Tyre: every head was made bald, and every shoulder was peced: yet had he no wages, nor his army, for Tyrus, for the service that he had served against it: 19. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will give the land of Egypt unto Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon; and he shall take her multitude, and take her spoil, and take her prey; and it shall be the wages for his army. 20. I have given him the land of Egypt for his labour wherewith he served against it, because they wrought for me, saith the Lord God. 21. In that day will I cause the horn of the house of Israel to bud forth, and I will give thee the opening of the mouth in the midst of them; and they shall know that I am the Lord.

The date of this prophecy is observable; it was in the twenty-seventh year of Ezekiel’s captivity, sixteen years after the prophecy in the former part of the chapter, and almost as long after those which follow in the next chapters; but it comes in here for the explanation of all that was said against Egypt. After the destruction of Jerusalem, Nebuchadrezzar parted his army, which consigned the conquest of the Ammonites and Moabites, and making himself master of their countries. Then he spent thirteen years in the siege of Tyre; during all that time the Egyptians were embroiled in war with the Cyrenians and one another, by which they were very much weakened and impoverished; and just at the end of the siege of Tyre, God delivers this prophecy to Jeremiah. For this reason it is placed amongst the prophecies of the captivity, or at the very first utter destruction of Egypt, which he had foretold fifteen or sixteen years before, which had been but in part accomplished hitherto, should now be completed by Nebuchadrezzar. The prophecy which begins here, it should seem, is continued to the twentieth verse of the next chapter. And Dr. Lightfoot observes, that it is the last prophecy we have of this prophet, and should have been last in the book, but is hid here, that all the prophecies against Egypt might come together. The particular destruction of Pharaoh-Hophra, foretold in the former part of this chapter, was likewise foretold, Jer. xlix. 30. This general devastation of Egypt by Nebuchadrezzar was foretold, Jer. xlix. 10, 11.

1. What success God would give to Nebuchadrezzar and his forces against Egypt. God gave him that land, that he might take the spoil and prey of it, v. 19, 20. It was a cheap and easy prey, he subdued it with very little difficulty. The blood and treasure expended upon the conquest of it were inconceivable; but it was a rich prey, and he carried off a great deal from it that was of value. Those having been divided among themselves, no doubt, gave a common enemy great advantage against them, who, when they had been so long preying upon one another, soon made a prey of them all. Et quid discordia eives perditur miseris—What wretchedness does civil discord bring! Jeremiah foretold that Nebuchadrezzar should array himself with the land of Egypt, as a shepherd puts on his coat, which intimates what a rich and cheap prey it should be.

2. Upon what considerations God would give Nebuchadrezzar this success against Egypt; it was to be a reward to him for the hard service which he had caused them, their army, to serve against Tyre, v. 18, 19. (1.) The taking of Tyre was a tedious piece of work, it cost Nebuchadrezzar abundance of blood and treasure; it held out thirteen years, all that time the Chaldean army was hard at it, to make themselves masters of it. A large current of the sea, between Tyre and the continent, was used up with earth, and many other difficulties which were thought insuperable they had to struggle with; but so great a prince, having begun such an undertaking, thought himself bound in honour to push it on, whatever it cost him. How many thousand lives have been sacrificed to such points of honour as this was! In prosecuting this siege, every head was made bald, and every shoulder feeleth, with carrying burdens, and labouring in the water, when they had a strong tide and a strong town to contend with. Egypt, a large kingdom, being divided within itself, is easily conquered; Tyre, a single city, being unanimous, is with difficulty subdued. These that have much to do in the world, find some affairs go on a great deal more readily and easily than others. But, (2.) In this service God showed them that they wrought for him, v. 20. He set them at work, for the hard service against city and its king; though they meant not so, neither did their heart think so, who were employed in it. Note, Even great men and bad men are tools that God makes use of, and are working for him, even when they are pursuing their own covetous and ambitious designs; so wonderfully does God overrule all to his own glory. Yet, (3.) For this service he had no wages assigned to his army. He was a great expense to take Tyre; and when he had it, though it was a very rich city, and he promised himself good plunder for his army from it, he was disappointed; the Tyrians sent away by ships their best effects, and threw the rest into the sea, so that they had nothing but bare walls. Thus are the children of this world ordinarily frustrated in their highest expectations, when the Lord’s designs are against it. Those that have the spoil of Egypt to recompense him for his service against Tyre. Note, God will be behind-hand with none for any service they do for him, but, one way or other, will recompense them for it; none shall kindle a fire on his altar for nothing. The service done for him by worldly men with worldly designs, shall be recompensed with a mere worldly reward, which his faithful servants that have a sincere regard to his will and glory, would not be put off with. This account for the prosperity of wicked men in this world; God is in it paying them for some service or other, in which he has made use of them; Verily they have their reward. Let none envy it them. The conquest of Egypt is spoken of as Nebuchadrezzar’s fall reward, for that completed his kingdom over the nations. He was a man in manner; that was the last of the kingdoms he subdued; when he was master of that, he became the head of gold.

3. The mercy God had in store for the house of Israel soon after. When the tide is at the highest, it will turn, and so it will when it is at the lowest. Nebuchadrezzar was now at the zenith of his glory when he had conquered Egypt, but within a year after he ran mad. (Dan. iv.) was so seven years; and within a year or two after he had recovered his senses he resigned his life. When he was at the highest, Israel was at the lowest, then were they in the depth of their captivity, their bones dead and dry; but in that day the horn of the house of Israel shall bud forth, v. 21. The day of their deliver-
ance shall begin to dawn, and they shall have some little reviving in their bondage; in the honour that shall be done, (1.) To their princes; they are the horns of the house of Israel, the seat of their glory and power, these began to bud forth when Daniel and his fellows were highly preferred in Babylon; Daniel sat in the gate of the city; Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, were set over the affairs of the province, (Dan. ii. 49.) these were all of the king's seed, and of the princes, Dan. i. 3. And it was within a year after the conquests of Egypt that these three were made famous by the honour God put upon them in bringing them alive out of the burning fiery furnace. This might very well be called the budding forth of the horns of the house of Israel. And, some years after, this promise had a further accomplishment in the enlargement and elevation of Jehezkelin king of Judah, Jer. lii. 31, 32. They were both tokens of God's favour to Israel, and happy omens. (2.) To their prophets; and I will give thee the opening of the mouth. Though none of Ezekiel's prophecies, after this, are recorded, yet we have reason to think he went on prophesying, and with more liberty and boldness, when Daniel and his fellows were in power, and would be ready to protect him not only from the Babylonians, but from the wicked ones of his own people. Note, It bodes well to a people when God enlarges the liberties of his ministers, and they are comforted and encouraged in their work.

CHAP. XXX.

In this chapter, we have, I. A continuation of the prophecy against Egypt, which we had in the latter part of the foregoing chapter, just before the desolation of that once flourishing kingdom was completed by Nebuchadrezzar. In which is foretold the destruction of all her allies and confederates, all her strong places and castles, and the several steps which the king of Babylon should take in pushing this destruction, v. 1. 19. II. A repetition of a former prophecy against Egypt, just before the desolation of it begun by the sword and captivity, which gradually weakened them, and prepared the way for the king of Babylon, v. 20. 26. It is all much to the same purport with what we had before.

1. THE word of the Lord came again unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, prophesy and say, Thus saith the Lord God, Howl ye, Wo worth the day! 3. For the day is near, even the day of the Lord is near, a cloudy day; it shall be the time of the heathen. 4. And the sword shall come upon Egypt, and great pain shall be in Ethiopia, when the slain shall fall in Egypt, and they shall take away her multitude, and her foundations shall be broken down. 5. Ethiopia, and Libya, and Lydia, and all the mingled people, and Chub, and the men of the land that is in league, shall fall with them by the sword. 6. Thus saith the Lord, They also that uphold Egypt shall fall; and the pride of her power shall come down: from the tower of Syene shall they fall in it by the sword, saith the Lord God, 7. And they shall be desolate in the midst of the countries that are desolate, and her cities shall be in the midst of the cities that are wasted. 8. And they shall know that I am the Lord, when I have set a fire in Egypt, and when all her helpers shall be destroyed. 9. In that day shall messengers go forth from me in ships, to make the careless Ethiopians afraid, and great pain shall come upon them, as in the day of Egypt for, lo, it cometh. 10. Thus saith the Lord God, I will also make the multitude of Egypt to cease by the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon. 11. He and his people with him, the terrible of the nations shall be brought to destroy the land: and they shall draw their swords against Egypt and fill the land with the slain. 12. And I will make the rivers dry, and sell the land into the hand of the wicked; and I will make the waste land, and all that is therein, by the hand of strangers: I the Lord have spoken it. 13. Thus saith the Lord God, I will also destroy the idols, and I will cause their images to cease out of Noph and there shall be no more a prince of the land of Egypt: and I will put a fear in the land of Egypt. 14. And I will make Pthros desolate, and will set fire in Zoan, and will execute judgments in No. 15. And I will pour my fury upon Sin, the strength of Egypt: and I will cut off the multitude of No. 16. And I will set fire in Egypt: Sin shall have great pain, and No shall be rent asunder, and Noph shall have distresses daily. 17. The young men of Aven and Pi-beseth shall fall by the sword: and these cities shall go into captivity. 18. At Tehaphrah also the day shall be darkened, when I shall break there the yokes of Egypt: and the pomp of her strength shall cease in her: as for her, a cloud shall cover her, and her daughters shall go into captivity. 19. Thus will I execute judgments in Egypt, and they shall know that I am the Lord.

The prophecy of the destruction of Egypt is here very full and particular, as well as, in the general, very frightful. What can protect a prouing people, when the righteous God comes forth to contend with them?

1. It shall be a very lamentable destruction, and such as shall occasion great sorrow; (v. 2, 3.) “Howl ye, ye may justly shriek now that it is coming, for ye will be made to shriek and lament it when it comes. Cry out, Wo worth the day! or, Ah the day, alas because of the day, the terrible day! Wo and alas! For the day is near; the day we have so long dreaded, so long deserved. It is the day of the Lord, the day in the which he will manifest himself as a God of vengeance; you have your day now, when you can all before you, and all about you, except you, and God will make his day now shortly; the day of the revelation of his righteous judgment,” Ps. xxxvii. 13. It will be a cloudy day, that is, dark and dismal, without the shining forth of any comfort; and it shall threaten a storm; fire, and brimstone, and a horrible tempest. It shall be the time of the heathen, of reckoning with the heathen, for all their heathenish practices; that time which David spake of when God would perform...
out his fury upon the heathen, (Ps. lxxix. 6.) when they should sink; Ps. ix. 15.

2. It shall be the destruction of Egypt, and of all the states and countries in confederacy with her, and in her neighbourhood. (1.) Egypt herself shall fall; (v. 4.) The sword shall come upon Egypt, the sword of the Chaldeans, and it shall be a victorious sword, for the slain shall fall in Egypt, fall by it, fall before it. Is the country populous? They shall take away her multitude. Is it strong, and well fixed? Her foundations shall be broken down, and they shall be broken down; but her strength, even her height, will fall of course. (2.) Her neighbours and inmates shall fall with her; when the slain fall so thick in Egypt, great pain shall be in Ethiopia, both that in Africa, which is in the neighbourhood of Egypt on one side, and that in Asia, which is near to it on the other side; when their neighbour’s house was on fire, they could not but apprehend their own in danger; nor were their fears groundless, for they shall all fall with them by the sword; (v. 5.) Ethiopia, and Libya, (Cush and Phut, so the Hebrew names are, two of the sons of Ham, who are mentioned,) and Misraim, that is, Egypt, between them, Gen. x. 6. The Lydians, who were famous archers, are spoken of as confederates with Egypt, Jer. xlvi. 3. These shall fall with Egypt and Chalda; the inhabitants of the inner Jowys, and these and others were the mingled people; there were those of all these and other countries, who upon some account or other resided in Egypt; as did also the men of the land that is in league, some of the remains of the people of Israel and Judah, the children of the covenant, or league, as they are called, (Acts iii. 25.) the children of the promise, Gen. iv. 28. These sojourning in Egypt, contrary to God’s command, and these shall fall with them. Note, They that will take their lot with God’s enemies, shall have their lot with them; yea, though they be in profession the men of the land that is in league with God.

3. All that pretend to support the sinking interests of Egypt, shall come down under her, shall come down with her; (v. 6.) They that uphold Egypt shall fall, and then Egypt must fall of course. See the justice of God; Egypt pretended to uphold Jerusalem when that was tottering, but proved a deceitful reed; and now they that pretended to uphold Egypt, shall prove no better. Those that deceive others are commonly paid in their own coin, they are themselves deceived. (1.) Does Egypt think he has the confederates and companions of his dominion or her king? The pride of her flower shall come down, v. 6. The power of the king of Egypt was his pride; but that shall be broken, and humbled. (2.) Is the multitude of her people her support? These shall fall by the sword, even from the tower of Syene, which is in the utmost corner of the land, from that side of it by which the enemy shall come against her. The confederates of the bandmen and the merchants shall be desolate, (v. 7.) as before, ch. xxxix. 12. Even the multitude of Egypt shall be made to cease, v. 10. That populous country shall be depopulated. The land shall be even filled with the slain, v. 11. (3.) Is the river Nile her support, and the several channels of it a defence to her? I will make the rivers dry, (v. 13.) and shall make the path barren, and shall give to the inhabitants, and to the merchants, to be desolate, (v. 7.) as before, ch. xxxix. 12. Even the multitude of Egypt shall be made to cease, v. 10. That populous country shall be depopulated. The land shall be even filled with the slain, v. 11. (4.) Is her royal family her support? There shall be no more a prince in the land of Egypt; the royal family shall be extirpated and extinguished, which had continued so long. (6.) Is her courage her support, and does she think to uphold herself by the bravery of her men at war, which she has been accustomed to service? That shall fail; I will put a fear in the heart of Egypt. (7.) Is the rising generation her support, is she upheld by her children, and does she think herself happy because she has her quiver full of them? Alas, the young men shall fall by the sword, (v. 17.) and the daughters shall go into captivity, (v. 18,) and so shall be robbed of all her hopes.

4. God shall employ his confederates, and his confederates shall be employed as instruments of this destruction; The multitude of Egypt shall be made to cease, and be quite cut off by the hand of the king of Babylon, v. 17. The hand of the king of Babylon, shall not be at all hindered by them; those that go about to quench the fire shall themselves be devoured by it; for who can stand before him when he is angry? Which he pours out his fury upon a place, when he sets fire to it, (v. 15, 16,) neither its strength nor its multitude can stand it in any stead.

5. The king of Babylon and his army shall be employed as instruments of this destruction; The multitude of Egypt shall be made to cease, and be quite cut off by the hand of the king of Babylon, v. 17. The hand of the king of Babylon, shall not be at all hindered by them; those that go about to quench the fire shall themselves be devoured by it; for who can stand before him when he is angry? Which he pours out his fury upon a place, when he sets fire to it, (v. 15, 16,) neither its strength nor its multitude can stand it in any stead.

6. No place in the land of Egypt shall be exempted from the fury of the Chaldean army, not the strongest, not the remotest; The sword shall go through the land. Diverse places are here named: Egypt, v. 11. and, (v. 14.) Sin and Raphia, v. 15, 16. Aven and Phubes, (v. 17.) Tel-Abbehes, v. 18. These shall be made desolate, shall be fired, and God’s judgments shall be executed upon them, and his fury poured out upon them. Their strength and multitude shall be cut off; they shall have great pain, shall be rent asunder with fear, and shall have distresses daily; their day shall be shortened, their joy turned into mourning, and hopes shall be extinguished; and whereas they thought themselves so strong, they shall have no more oppress and tyrannize as they have done; the pomp of their strength shall cease, and a cloud shall cover them; a cloud so thick that through it they shall not see any hopes, nor shall their glory be seen, or shine further. And, lastly, the Ethiopians, who are at a distance from them, shall not be afraid; they shall share in their pain and terror; God will employ his providence and his vengeance spread the rumour, and the careless Ethiopians shall be made afraid, &c. v. 9. Note, God can strike a terror upon those that are most secure; fearfulness shall, when he pleases, surprise the most presumptuous hypocrites.

The close of this prediction leaves, (1.) The land of Egypt mortified; Thus will I execute judgments on Egypt, v. 19. The destruction of Egypt is the
executing of judgments, which intimates not only that it is done justly, for its sins, but that it is done regularly, by the course of nature. The executions God does, are according to his judgments. (2.) The God of Israel herein glorified; 

They shall know that I am the Lord. The Egyptians shall be made to know it, and the people of God shall be made to know it better. The Lord is known by the judgments which he executeth.

20. And it came to pass in the eleventh year, in the first month, in the seventh day of the month, that the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, 21. Son of man, I have broken the arm of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and, lo, it shall not be bound up to be healed, to put a roller to bind it, to make it strong to hold the sword. 22. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I am against Pharaoh king of Egypt, and will break his arms, the strong, and that which was broken; and I will cause the sword to fall out of his hand. 23. And I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and will disperse them through the countries. 24. And I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon, and put my sword in his hand: but I will break Pharaoh’s arms, and he shall groan before him with the groanings of a deadly-wounded man. 25. But I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon, and the arms of Pharaoh shall fall down; and they shall know that I am the Lord, when I put my sword into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall stretch it out upon the land of Egypt. 26. And I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and disperse them among the countries; and they shall know that I am the Lord.

This short prophecy of the weakening of the power of Egypt was delivered about the time that the army of the Egyptians, who attempted to make the siege of Jerusalem, was frustrated in its enterprises, and returned re infecta—without accomplishing their purpose; whereupon the king of Babylon renewed the siege, and carried his point. The kingdom of Egypt was very ancient, and had been many ages considerable. That of Babylon was but lately arrived at its great pomp and power, being built upon the ruins of the kingdom of Assyria. Now it is with them as it is with fat and lean,—when fat is growing up, others are declining and going back; one must increase, and the other must of course decrease.

1. It is here foretold that the kingdom of Egypt shall grow weaker and weaker. The extent of his territories shall be abridged, his wealth and power shall be diminished, and he shall become less able than ever to resist, either for himself or his friend. (1.) This was in part done already; (v. 21.) I have broken the arm of Pharaoh some time ago. One arm of that kingdom might well be reckoned broken, when the king of Babylon routed the forces of Pharaoh-Necho at Carchemish, (Jer. xlix. 2.) And made himself master of all that pertained to Egypt from the river of Egypt to Euphrates, (2 Kings xxiv. 7.) Egypt had been long in gathering strength, and extending its dominions, and therefore that there may be a proportion observed in providence, it loses its strength slowly and by degrees. It was soon after the king of Egypt was broken, that the king of Assyria was exalted, and Egypt, with much of its territory, was given into the hands of Assyria. And when the king of Assyria was broken, the king of Babylon was exalted. Assyria, then, at this time, must be the king of Babylon. Assyria, in the end, must have been the king of Babylon; and Egypt, in the end, must have been the king of Assyria. (2.) As the king of Babylon was exalted, the king of Assyria was exalted; and the king of Assyria was exalted, the king of Babylon was exalted; and, therefore, the king of Babylon shall have his reign, that its arm was thus broken, and it received that fatal blow which it never recovered. Before Egypt’s heart and neck were broken, its arm was; God’s judgments come upon a people by steps that they may meet him repenting. When the arm of Egypt is broken, it shall not be bound up to be healed, for none can heal the wounds that God gives, but himself. God, in this, is like a bar of iron, or a sword, or any instrument of torture, that can only break or wound. A sword, when struck, cannot again hold the sword. (2.) This was to be done again; one arm was broken before, and something was done toward the setting of it, toward the healing of the deadly wound that was given to the beast. But now (v. 22.) I am against Pharaoh, and will break both his arms; both the strong, and that which was broken and set again. Note, If lesser judgments do not prevail to humble and reform sinners, God will send greater. Now God will cause the sword to fall out of his hand, which he caught hold of as thinking himself strong enough to hold it. It is repeated, (v. 24.) I will break Pharaoh’s arms. He had been a cruel oppressor to the people of God formerly, and of late the staff of a broken rod to them; and now God, by breaking his arms, reckons with him. For the Lord God most justly breaks that power which is abused either to uphold the wicked, or to put cheats upon them. But this is not all; (1.) The king of Egypt shall be dispirited, when he finds himself in danger of the king of Babylon’s forces; he shall groan before him with the groanings of a deadly wounded man. Note, It is common for those that are most elevated in their prosperity, to be most dejected and dishonored in their adversity. Pharaoh, even before the sword touches him, shall groan as if he had received his death’s wound. (2.) The people of Egypt shall be dispersed, (v. 23.) and again, (v. 26.) I will scatter them among the nations. Other nations had mingled with them, (v. 3.) now they shall be mingled with other nations, and seek shelter in them, and so be made to know that the Lord is righteous.

2. It is here foretold that the kingdom of Babylon shall grow stronger and stronger, v. 24. 25. It is said and repeated, that God will, (1.) Put strength into the king of Babylon’s arms, that he may be able to go through the service he is designed for. (2.) That he will put a sword, his sword, into the king of Babylon’s hand, which signified his giving him a commission, and furnishing him with arms for carrying on a war, particularly against Egypt, who, as a kingdom, was his chief enemy. As judges on the bench, like Pilate, (John xix. 11.) so generals in the field, like Nebuchadnezzar, have no power but what is given them from above.

CHAP. XXXI.

The prophecy of this chapter, as the two chapters before, is against Egypt, and designed for the humbling and mortifying of those who are proud and high. In this case, as in all others, it is usual to consult precedents, and to see what has been done to others in like case, which serves both to direct and to justify the proceedings: Pharaoh stands in the bar of divine justice for his pride and haughtiness, and the injuries he had done to God’s people; but he thinks himself so high, so great, as not to be accountable to any authority; so strong, and so well guarded, as to be even more remote than Pharaoh from the prophet is therefore directed to make a report to him of the case of the king of Assyria, whose head city was Nineveh. 1. He must show him how great a monarch the king of Babylon is, and been in what a mighty state he bore; the king of Egypt, great as he was, could not go beyond him, v. 3. 9. II. He must then show him how he was to the king of Assyria, and how he had been a terror to him. III. He must next read him the history of the fall and ruin of the king of Assyria, what a noise it made among the nations, and what a warning it gave to all potent princes to take heed of pride, v. 11. 17. IV. He must leave the king of
Egypt to apply all this to himself, to see his own face in the looking-glass of the king of Assyria's son, and to foresee his own fall through the perspective-glass of his ruin, v. 18.

1. And it came to pass in the eleventh year, in the third month, in the first day of the month, that the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, speak unto Pharaoh king of Egypt, and to his multitude; Whom art thou like in thy greatness? 3. Behold, the Assyrian was a cedar in Lebanon with fair branches, and with a shadowing shroud, and of a high stature; and his top was among the thick boughs. 4. The waters made him great, the deep set him up on high with her rivers running round about his plants, and sent out her little rivers unto all the trees of the field. 5. Therefore his height was exalted above all the trees of the field, and his boughs were multiplied, and his branches became long, because of the multitude of waters, when he shot forth. 6. All the fowls of heaven made their nests in his boughs, and under his branches did all the beasts of the field bring forth their young, and under his shadow dwelt all great nations.

3. Thus was he fair in his greatness, in the length of his branches: for his root was by great waters. 8. The cedars in the garden of God could not hide him: the fir-trees were not like his boughs, and the Chesnut-trees were not like his branches; nor any tree in the garden of God was like unto him in his beauty. 9. I have made him fair by the multitude of his branches: so that all the trees of Eden, that were in the garden of God, envied him.

This prophecy bears date the month before Jerusalem was taken, as that in the close of the foregoing chapter about four months before; when God's people were in the depth of their distress, it would be some comfort to them, as it would serve likewise for a check to the pride and malice of their neighbours, that insulted over them, to be told from heaven that the cup was going round, even the cup of trembling, that it would shortly be taken out of the hands of God's people, and put into the hands of those that hated them, Isa. li. 22, 23. In this prophecy,

1. The prophet is directed to put Pharaoh upon searching the records for a case parallel to his own; (v. 2.) See Ezek. xiii. 22 and the multitude of his attendants, that contributed so much to his magnificence, and the multitude of his armies, that contributed so much to his strength; these he was proud of, these he put a confidence in, and they were as proud of him, and trusted as much in him. Now ask him, Whom art thou like in thy greatness? We are apt to judge of ourselves by comparison. Those that think highly of themselves, fancy themselves as great and as good as such and such, that have been mightily celebrated. The flatterers of princes tell them whom they equal in pomp and grandeur; "Well," says God, "let him pitch upon the most famous potentate that ever was, and it shall be allowed that he is like him in greatness, and no way inferior to him; but let him pitch upon he will, he will find that his day came to fall; he will see there was an end of all his perfection, and must therefore expect the end of his own in like manner." Note, The falls of others, both into sin and ruin, are a warning to us. God's judgment is not to be seen only in great and high-minded, or to think we stand out of danger.

2. He is directed to show him an instance of one whom he resembled in greatness; and that was the Assyrian, (v. 3.) whose monarchy had continued from Nimrod. Sennacherib was one of the mighty princes of that monarchy; but it sunk down soon after him, and the monarchy of Nebuchadnezzar was built upon its ruins. grandchildren, not to be seen. Let us now see what a flourishing prince the king of Assyria was. He is here compared to a stately cedar, v. 3. The glory of the house of David is illustrated by the same similitude, ch. xvii. 3. The olive-tree, the fig-tree, and the vine, which were all fruit-trees, had refused to be promoted over the trees, because they would not leave their fruitfulness; (Judg. ix. 8, &c.) and therefore the choice falls upon the cedar, that is stately and strong, and casts a great shadow, but bears no fruit.

1. The Assyrian monarch was a tall cedar, such as the cedars in Lebanon generally were, of a high stature, and his top among the thick boughs; he was attended by other princes that were tributaries to him, and was surrounded by a life-guard of brave youths, who guarded his person, and his household, they were all shrubs to him; (v. 3.) His height was exalted above all the trees of the field, they were many of them very high, but he overshadowed them all, v. 8. The cedars, even these in the garden of Eden, where, we may suppose, they were the best of the kind, would not hide him, but his top branches outsaw theirs.

He was a spreading cedar: his branches did not only run off in height, but run out in breadth; denoting that this mighty prince was not only exalted to great dignity and honour, and had a name above the names of the great men of the earth, but that he obtained great dominion and power; his territories were large, and he extended his conquests far, and his influences much farther. This cedar, like a vine, sent forth his branches to the sea, to the river, Ps. lxxx. 11. His boughs were made his branches became long; (v. 5.) so that he had a shadowing shroud, v. 3. This contributed very much to his beauty, that he grew proportionably large as well as high. He was fair in his greatness, in the length of his branches, (v. 7.) very comely as well as very stately, fair by the multitude of his branches, v. 9. His large dominions were well managed, like a spreading tree that is kept in shape and good order by the skill of the gardener, so as to be very beautiful to the eye. His government was as amiable in the eyes of wise men, as it was admirable in the eyes of all men. The fir-trees were not like his boughs, so straight, so green, so regular; nor were the branches of the Chesnut-trees like his branches, so thick, so spreading. In short, no tree has such glory, the godly may be compared to a tree, that stood where paradise was planted, there where there was every tree that was pleasant to the sight, (Gen. i. 9.) there was none like this cedar in beauty; in all the nations about there was no prince so much admired, so much courted, and which every body was so much in love with, as the king of Assyria. Many of them did virtually, but he excelled them all, in all, in his Excellency. All the trees of Eden envied him, v. 9. When they found they could not compare with him, they were angry and grieved that he so far outdid them, and secretly grudged him the praise due to him. Note, It is the unhappiness of those who in any thing excel others, that thereby they make themselves the objects of envy; and who can stand before envy?
3. He was serviceable, as far as a standing, growing cedar could be, and that only by his shadow; (v. 6.) All the fowls of heaven, some of all sorts, made their nests in his boughs, where they were sheltered from the injuries of the weather. The branches of the field put themselves under the protection of his branches, where they were levant—rising up, and coeheant—lying down, there they brought forth their young; for they had there a natural covert from the heat and from the storm. The meaning of all is, Under his shadow dwelt all great nations; they all fled to him for safety, and was willing to wear allegiance to his crown; he would undertake to protect them; as travellers in a shower come under thick trees for shelter. Note, Those who have power, ought to use it for the protection and comfort of those whom they have power over; for to that end they are intrusted with power. Even the bramble, if he be anointed king, invites the trees to come, and trust in his shadow, Judg. ix. 15. But the utmost security that any creature, even the king of Assyria himself, can give, is but the shadow of a tree, which is but a scancy and slender protection, and leaves a man many ways exposed. Let us therefore flee to God for protection, and he will take us under the shadow of his wings, where we shall be warmer and safer than under the shadow of the strongest and stachest cedar, Ps. xvii. 8.—xcli. 4.

4. He seemed to be settled and established in great power; (v. 4.) As God that made him fair, v. 9. For by him kings reign: he was comely with the comeliness that God put upon him. Note, God’s hand must be eyed and owned in the advancement of the great men of the earth; and therefore we must not envy them: yet that will not secure the continuance of their prosperity; for he that gave them their beauty, if they be deprived of it, knows how to turn it into dereliction. (2. Cor. ix. 6.) It seemed to have a good bottom; this cedar was not like the heath in the desert, made to inhabit the parched places, (Jer. xvi. 6.) it was not a root in a dry ground, Isa. lii. 2. No, he had abundance of wealth to support his power and grandeur; (v. 4.) The waters made him great; he had vast treasures, large stores and magazines, which were as the deep that set him up on high, constant revenues coming in by taxes, customs, and other revenues, which were as rivers course to and about his plants; these enabled him to strengthen and secure his interests everywhere, for he sent out his little rivers, or conduits, to all the trees of the field, to water them, and when they had maintenance from the king’s palace, (Ezra iv. 14.) and their country was nourished by the king’s country, (Acts xxi. 20.) they would be serviceable and faithful to him. Those that have wealth flowing upon them in great rivers, find themselves obliged to send it out again in little rivers; for, as goods are increased, they are increased that eat them, and the more men have, the more occasion they have for it; yea, and still the more they have occasion for. The branches of this cedar became long because of the multitude of waters, which fed them, (v. 5. and v. 7.) his root was by great waters, which seems to secure that it shall not die either, (Ps. i. 3.) that it should not see when heat comes, Jer. xvii. 8. Note, Worldly people may seem to have an established prosperity, yet it only seems so, Job v. 3. Ps. xxxix. 55.

10. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Because thou hast lifted up thyself in height, and he hath shot up his top among the thick boughs, and his heart is lifted up in his height; 11. I have, therefore, delivered him into the hand of the mighty one of the heathen; he shall surely deal with him: I have driven him out for his wickedness. 12. And strangers, the terrible of the nations, have cut him off, and have left him upon the mountains, and in the valleys his branches are fallen, and his boughs are broken by all the rivers of the land; and all the people of the earth are gone down from his shadow, and have left him. 13. Upon his ruin shall all the fowls of heaven remain, and all the beasts of the field shall be upon his branches: 14. To the end that none of all the trees by the waters exalt themselves for their height, neither shoot up their top among the thick boughs, neither their trees stand up in their height, all that drink water: for they are all delivered unto death, to the nether parts of the earth, in the midst of the children of men, with them that go down to the pit. 15. Thus saith the Lord God, In the day when he went down to the grave I caused a mourning; I covered the deep for him, and I restrained the floods thereof; and the great waters were stayed; and I caused Lebanon to mourn for him, and all the trees of the field fainted for him. 16. I made the nations to shake at the sound of his fall, when I cast him down to hell with them that descend into the pit; and all the trees of Eden, the choice and best of Lebanon, all that drink water, shall be comforted in the nether parts of the earth. 17. They also went down into hell with him, unto them that be slain with the sword; and they that were his arm, that dwelt under his shadow in the midst of the heathen. 18. To whom art thou thus like in glory and in greatness among the trees of Eden? yet shalt thou be brought down with the trees of Eden unto the nether parts of the earth: thou shalt lie in the midst of the uncircumcised with them that be slain by the sword. This is Pharaoh, and all his multitude, saith the Lord God.

We have seen the king of Egypt resembling the king of Syria in pomp and power and prosperity, how like he was to him in greatness; now here we see,

1. How he does likewise resemble him in his pride; (v. 10.) for as face answers to face in a glass, so doth one corrupt, carnal heart to another; and the same temptations of a prosperous state by which some are overcome, are fatal to many others too. Thou, O king of Egypt, hast lifted up thyself in height, hast been proud of thy wealth and power, ch. xxix. 3. And just so, he, the king of Assyria, when he had shot up his top among the thick boughs, his heart was immediately lifted up in his height, and he grew insolent and imperious, set God himself at defiance, and trampled upon his people; witness the messages and letter which that great king, the king of Assyria, sent to Hezekiah, Isa. xxxvii. 4. How haughtily does he speak of himself and his own achievements, how scourfully of that great and good man! There were other sins in which the Egyptians and the Assyrians did concur, particular-
lady that of oppressing God's people; it is charged upon them both together, (Isa. li. 4.) but here that sin is run up to its cause, and that was, pride; for it is the pride of greatness which is put forth in the large expressions with.

Note, When men's outward condition rises, their minds commonly rise with it. And it is very rare to find an humble spirit in the midst of great advancements.

II. How he shall therefore resemble him in his fall; and for the opening of this part of the comparison.

Here is a history of the fall of the king of Assyria. For his part, says God, (v. 11.) I have therefore, because he was thus lifted up, delivered him into the hand of the mighty one of the heathen. Cyrus, king of the Medes, in the 26th year of his reign, in conjunction with Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, in the 1st year of his reign, destroyed Nineveh, and with it the Assyrian empire. Nebuchadnezzar, though he was not then, yet afterwards became, very emphatically, the mighty one of the heathen; most mighty among them; and most mighty over them, to prevail against them. (1.) It is God himself that orders his ruin; I have delivered him into the hand of the executioner; I have driven him out. Note, God is the Judge, who puts down one, and sets up another, Ps. lxxxv. 7. And when he pleased, he delivered kings, who, being both armed and compassed, and themselves, and seem to others, to have taken deeppest root. And the mightiest ones of the heathens could not gain their point against those they contended with, if the Almighty did not himself deliver them into their hands. (2.) It is his own sin that procures his ruin; I have delivered him out for his wickedness. None are driven out from their honour, power, and possessions, but it is for their wickedness. None of our comforts are ever lost, but what have been a thousand times forfeited. If the wicked are driven away, it is in their wickedness. (3.) It is a mighty one of the heathen that shall be the instrument of his ruin. For God often employs one wicked man in punishing another. He shall surely deal with him, shall know how to manage him, great as he is. Note, Proud, imperious men will, sooner or later, meet with their match.

Now, in this history of the fall of the Assyrian, we observe,

[1.] A continuation of the similitude of the cedar. He grew very high, and extended his boughs very far; but his day comes to fall. First, This stately cedar was cropped; the terrible of the nations cut him down. He was designed to be an instrument of ruin, to be used against his enemies; he was regiments to kill and slay and destroy, may well be reckoned among the terrible of the nations; they have lopped off his branches first; have seized upon some parts of his dominion, and forced them out of his hands; so that in all mountains and valleys of the nations about, in the high-lands and low-lands, and by all the rivers, there were cities or countries that were cut down, and he was cut down, that had been subject to it, but were either revolted or recovered from it. Its feathers were borrowed; and when every bird had fetched back its own, it was naked like the stump of a tree. Secondly, It was deserted; All the people of the earth, that had fled to him for shelter, are gone down from his whiteness, and have left him. When he was disabled to afford them protection, they thought they no longer owed him allegiance. Let not great men be proud of the number of those that attend them, and have a dependence upon them, it is only for what they can get; when Providence frowns upon them, their retinue is soon dispersed and scattered from them. Thirdly, It was insulted over, and its full triumphed in; (v. 13.) Upon his ruin shall all the fowls of the heaven remain, to tread upon the broken branches of this cedar. Its fall is triumphed in by the other trees, who were angry to see themselves over-stript so much; All the trees of Eden, that were cut down and fallen before him, all that drank water of the rivers of comfort, which would not be提起, the tree in the south, is said to bow with the dew of heaven, (Dan. iv. 25.) and to bud through the scent of water; (Job xiv. 9.) all these shall be comforted in the nether parts of the earth, when they see this proud cedar brought as low as themselves. Solomon miseris sociis habuitis doloris—To have companions in woe is a solace to those who suffer. But, on the contrary, in the fall of this cedar we learn to be careful not to set our hearts on earthy things, nor to put our trust in them, that we be not cut down in the time of our prosperity, and that our confidence fail us.

[2.] An exhibition of the similitudes of the cedar. By the cutting down of this cedar is signified the slaughter of this mighty monarch and all his adherents and supporters; they are all delivered to death, to fall by the sword, as the cedar by the axe: he and his princes, who, he said, were altogether kings, go down to the grave, to the nether parts of the earth, in the midst of the children of men, as common persons of no quality or distinction; they die like men, (Ps. lxxxii. 7.) they were carried away with whom they went down to the grave, but they neither protect nor descend after them. Again, (v. 16.) He was cast down to hell with them that desced into the pit; he went into the state of the dead, and was buried as others are, in obscurity and oblivion. Again, (v. 17.) They all that were his arm, on whom he stayed, by whom he acted, and exerted his power, all that dwelt under his shadow, his subjects and allies, and all that had any dependence on him, they all went down into ruin, down into the grave with him, unto them that were slain with the sword, to those that were cut off by unimply deaths before them, under the load of guilt and shame. When great men fall, a great many fall with them, as a great many in like manner have fallen before them.

[3.] What God designed, and aimed at, in bringing down this mighty monarch and his monarchy. He designed thereby, First, To give an alarm to the nations about; to put them all to a stand, to put them all to a goose; (v. 16.) I made the nations to shake at the sound of his fall; they were all struck with astonishment to see so mighty a prince brought down thus; it gave a shock to all their confidences, and struck down very one. Secondly, To give him a funeral, and deliver him up to another channel, that of lamentation. Lebanon particularly, the kingdom of Syria, that was sometimes in confederacy with the Assyrian, mourned for him; as the allies of Babylon, Rev. xviii. 9. Secondly, To give an admonition to the nations about, and to their kings; (v. 14.) To the end that none of all the trees by the waters, though ever so advantageously situated, may exalt themselves; the pride of the mighty be not exalted, that they may not make themselves equal to the Lord, in rebelliousness of themselves, and shoot up their top among the thick boughs, looking disdainfully upon others, nor stand upon themselves for their height, confiding in their own policies and powers, as they could never be brought down. Let them all take warning by the Assyrian, for he once held up his head as high, and thought he kept his footing as firm, as any of them; but his pride went before his destruction, and his confidence failed him; and, The fall of EZEKIEL, XXXI. 729

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ch. xxiii. 1. And it came to pass in the twelfth year, in the twelfth month, in the first day of the month, that the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, take up a lamentation for Pharaoh king of Egypt, and say unto him, Thou art like a young lion of the nations, and thou art as a whale in the seas; and thou comest forth with thy rivers, and troublest the waters with thy feet, and foulest the rivers. 3. Thus saith the Lord God, I will, therefore, spread out my net over thee with a company of many people; and they shall bring thee up in my net. 4. Then will I leave thee upon the land, I will cast thee forth upon the open field, and will cause all the foulness of the heaven to remain upon thee, and I will fill the beasts of the whole earth with thee. 5. And I will lay thy flesh upon the mountains, and fill the valleys with thy height. 6. I will also water with thy blood the land wherewith thou swimmest, even to the mountains; and the rivers shall be full of thee. 7. And when I shall put thee out, I will cover the heaven, and make the stars thereof dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give her light. 8. All the bright lights of heaven will I make dark over thee, and set darkness upon thy land, saith the Lord God. 9. I will also vex the hearts of many people, when I shall bring thy destruction among the nations, into the countries which thou hast not known. 10. Yea, I will make many people amazed at thee, and their kings shall be horribly afraid for thee, when I shall brandish my sword before them; and they shall tremble at every moment, every man for his own life, in the day of thy fall. 11. For thus saith the Lord God, The sword of the king of Babylon shall come upon thee. 12. By the swords of the mighty will I cause thy multitude to fall, the terrible of the nations, all of them; and they shall spoil the pomp of Egypt, and all the multitude thereof shall be destroyed. 13. I will destroy also all the beasts thereof from beside the great waters; neither shall the foot of man trouble them any more, nor the hoof of beasts trouble them. 14. Then will I make their waters deep, and cause their rivers to run like oil, saith the Lord God. 15. When I shall make the land of Egypt desolate, and the country shall be destitute of that whereof it was full, when I shall smite all them that dwell therein, then shall they know that I am the Lord. 16. This is the lamentation wherewith they shall lament her; the daughters of the nations shall lament her; they shall lament for her, even for Egypt, and for all her multitude, saith the Lord God.

Here, 1. The prophet is ordered to take up a lamentation for Pharaoh king of Egypt, v. 2. It concerns ministers to be much of a serious spirit, and, in order thereto, to be frequent in taking up lamentations for the fall and ruin of sinners, as those that have not desired, but dreaded the woful day. Note, Ministers that would affect others with the things of God, must make it appear that they are themselves affected with the miseries which sinners bring upon themselves by their sins. It becomes us to weep and tremble for those that will not weep and tremble for themselves, to try if thereby we may set them a weeping, set them a trembling.

2. He is ordered to show cause for that lamentation. 1. Pharaoh has been a trouble of the nations, even of his own nation, which he should have procured the repose of. He is like a young lion of the nations, (v. 2.) loud and noisy, heering and...
threatening, as a lion when he roars. Great poten-
tates, if they be tyrannical and oppressive, are, in God's account, no better than beasts of prey. He is like the crocodile, large in the seas, very turbulent and vexatious, as the leviathan that makes the deep to boil like a pot, Job xli. 31. When Pharaoh engaged in an unnecessary war with the Cyrenians, he came forth with his rivers, with his armies, troubled the waters, disturbed his own kingdom, and the neighbouring nations, foiled the rivers, and made them madly. Nor is Pharaoh's deed of desolation often done by
him in this world by the restless ambition and impiacable res-
sentments of proud princes. Ahab is he that troubleth Israel, and not Elijah.

2. He that has troubled others, must expect to be himself troubled; for the Lord is righteous, Josh. vii. 25.

(1.) This is set forth here by a comparison. 1. Pharaoh, like a great whale, which, when it comes up the river, gives great disturbance, a leviathan which Job cannot draw out with a hook? (Job xli. 1.) Yet God has a net for him, which is large enough to ensnare him, and strong enough to secure him; (v. 3.) I will spread my net over thee, even the army of the Chaldeans, a company of many people; they shall force him out of his fastnesses, discharge his treasure of his possessions, throw him into a great fish upon dry ground, upon the open field, (v. 4.) where, being out of his element, he must die of course, and be a prey to the birds and beasts, as was foretold, ch. xxix. 5. What can the strongest fish do to help itself, when it is out of the water, and lies gasping? The flesh of this great whale shall be laid upon the mountains, (v. 5) and the valleys shall be filled with his height. Such num-ers of Pharaoh's soldiers shall be slain, that the dead bodies shall be scattered upon the hills, and there shall be heaps of them piled up in the valleys. Blood shall be shed in such abundance as to swell the rivers in the valleys. Or, Such shall be the bulk, such the height, of this leviathan, that, when he is laid upon the ground, he shall fill a valley. Such vast quantities of blood shall issue from this leviathan, as shall water the land of Egypt, the land wherein now he swains, now he sports himself, v. 6. It shall reach to the mountains, and the waters of Egypt shall again be turned into blood, by this means; The rivers shall be full of
thee. The judgments executed upon Pharaoh of old are expressed by the breaking of the head of Leviathan, the sea, and the mountains, with the waters: (ch. xxxvii. 20.) and in the same manner, as said above, when Pharaoh was met with the seven plagues, upon the three days' journey, they were so many in number, as they were used to be counted, thus: In the sea, in the sands, in the rivers, in the mountains, etc. (v. 7.) The heavens shall be hung with black, the stars darkened, the sun eclipsed, and the moon be deprived of her borrowed light. It is from the upper world that this lower world receives its light; and therefore, (v. 8.) when the bright lights of heaven are made dark above, darkness by consequence shall fall upon the earth, and so it shall be on the land of Egypt. Here the plague of darkness, which was upon Egypt of old for three days, seems to be alluded to, as, before, the turning of the waters into blood. For when former judgments are forgotten, it is just that they should be repeated. When their privy-counsellers, and statesmen, and those that have the direction of the public affairs, are deprived of wisdom, and made fools, and the things that belong to their peace are hid from their eyes, then their lights are dark-
cored, and the land is in a mist. This is foretold, Is. xix. 13. The princes of Zion are become fools, (Hos. xi. 7.) and this was more fully brought out upon the spreading of the report of the fall of Egypt, and the bringing of the news to remote countries, countries which they had not known, (v. 9.) people shall be much affected, and shall feel themselves sensibly touched by it. (1.) It shall fill them with vexation to see such an ancient, wealthy, potent kingdom thus humbled and brought down, and the pride of worldly glory, which they have from their ancestors, shall be reprobated and abhorred. (2.) They will be vexed to see the word of the God of Israel fulfilled in the destruction of Egypt, and that all the gods of Egypt were not able to relieve it. Note, The destruction of some wicked people is a vexation to others. (2.) It shall fill them with admiration; (v. 10.) They shall be amazed at thee, shall wonder to see so great riches and power come to nothing, Rev. xviii. 17. Note, They that ad-
mire with complacency the pomp of this world, will admire with consternation the ruin of that pomp; which to those that know the vanity of all things here below is no surprise at all. (3.) It shall fill them with fear; Even their kings (that think it their prerogative to be secure) shall be horribly afraid for thee, concluding their own house to be no longer in safety, nor their nation secure. (4.) I shall brandish my sword before them, they shall tremble every man for his own life. Note, When the sword of God's justice is drawn against some, to cut them off, it is thereby brandished before others, to give them warning. And those that will not be admonished by it, and made to reform, shall yet be frightened by it, and made to tremble. They shall tremble at every moment, because of thy fall. When others are ruined by sin, we have reason to quake for fear, as knowing ourselves guilty and ob-
oxious. Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God? (3.) It is set forth by a plain and express predic-
tion of the desolation itself that should come upon Egypt.

(1.) The instruments of the desolation appear here very formidable. It is the sword of the king of Babylon, that warlike, that victorious prince, that shall come upon thee; (v. 11.) the swords of the mighty, even the terrible of the nations, all of
them, (v. 12.) an army that there is no standing be-
fore. Note, Those that delight in war, and are upon all occasions entering into contention, may ex-
pect some to be used against them, to be brought into some very severe actions, that will prove too hard for them. Pharaoh had been forced to quarrel with his neighbour, and to come forth with his rivers, with his armies, v. 2. But God will now give him enough of it.

(2.) The instances of the desolation appear here very frightful, much the same with what we had before, ch. xxix. 10.—12. ch. xxx. 7. First, The inhabitants of the earth shall be so amazed, some picked out to be made examples, but all cut off. Note, The numbers of sinners, though they be a multitude, will neither secure them against God's power, nor entitle them to his pity. Secondly, The pomp of Egypt shall be spoiled; the pomp of their court, what they have been proud of. Note, In revenging the pomps of this world, God never takes the least of the riches that belong to them. Thirdly, The cattle of Egypt, that used to feed by the rivers, shall be destroyed, (v. 13.) either cut off by the sword, or carried off for a prey. Egypt was famous for horses, which would be an acceptable booty to the Chaldeans. The rivers shall be no more frequented as they have been by man and beast, that came thither to drink.

Fourthly, The waters of Egypt, that used to flow
briskly, shall now grow deep and slow and heavy, and shall run like oil, (v. 14.) a figurative expression signifying that there shall be such external address and heaviness upon the whole nation, that even the rivers should go softly and silently like mourners, and quite forget their rapid motion. 

Fithly, The whole country of Egypt shall be stripped of its wealth; it shall be destitute of that whereof it was full, (v. 15.) corn and cattle, and all the pleasant fruits of the earth; when these are smitten, the pestilence that shall be brought is unutterable, and that which is gathered becomes an easy prey to the invader. Note, God can soon empty those of this world's goods that have the greatest fulness of those things, and are full of them; that enjoy most, and have their hearts set upon those enjoyments. The Egyptians were full of their pleasant and plentiful country, and its rich productions. Every one that talked with them should have perceived, how much it filled them. But God can soon make their country destitute of that whereof it is full; it is therefore our wisdom to be full of treasures in heaven. When the country is made destitute, 1. It shall be an instruction to them; Then shall they know that I am the Lord. A sensible conviction of the vanity of the world, and the fading, perishing nature of all things in it, will contribute more to our right knowledge of God as our Portion and Happiness. 2. It shall be a lamentation to all about them: The daughters of the nations shall lament her, (v. 16.) either because, being in alliance with her, they share in her grievances, and suffer with her; or, being admirers of her; they at least share in her grief, and sympathize with her. They shall lament for Egypt and all her multitude; it shall excite their pity to see so great a devastation made. By enlarging the matters of our joy we increase the occasions of our sorrow.

17. It came to pass also in the twelfth year, in the fifteenth day of the month, that the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, 18. Son of man, wail for the multitude of Egypt, and cast them down, even her, and the daughters of the famous nations, unto the nether parts of the earth, with them that go down into the pit. 19. Whom dost thou pass in beauty? go down, and be thou laid with the uncircumcised. 20. They shall fall in the midst of them that are slain by the sword; she is delivered to the sword: draw her and all her multitudes. 21. The strong among the mighty shall speak to him out of the midst of hell with them that help him: they are gone down, they lie uncircumcised, slain by the sword. 22. Asshur is there, and all her company; his graves are about him; all of them slain, fallen by the sword: 23. Whose graves are set in the sides of the pit, and her company is round about her grave; all of them slain, fallen by the sword, which caused terror in the land of the living. 24. There is Edam, and all her multitude round about her grave; all of them slain, fallen by the sword, which are gone down uncircumcised into the nether parts of the earth, which caused their terror in the land of the living; yet have they borne their shame with them that go down to the pit. 25. They have set her a bed in the midst of the slain with all her multitudes: her graves are round about him; all of them uncircumcised, slain by the sword: though their terror was caused in the land of the living, yet have they borne their shame with them that go down to the pit: he is put in the midst of them that be slain. 26. There is Meshech, Tubal, and all her multitude: her graves are round about him; all of them uncircumcised, slain by the sword, though they caused their terror in the land of the living. 27. And they shall not lie with the mighty that are fallen of the uncircumcised, which are gone down to hell with their weapons of war; and they have laid their swords under their heads; but their iniquities shall be upon their bones, though they were the terror of the mighty in the land of the living. 28. Yea, thou shalt be broken in the midst of the uncircumcised, and shalt lie with them that are slain with the sword. 29. There is Edom, her kings, and all her princes, which with their might are laid by them that were slain by the sword: they shall lie with the uncircumcised, and with them that go down to the pit. 30. There be the princes of the north, all of them, and all the Zidonians, which are gone down with the slain; with their terror they are ashamed of their might; and they lie uncircumcised with them that be slain by the sword, and hear their shame with them that go down to the pit. 31. Pharaoh shall see them, and shall be comforted over all his multitude, even Pharaoh and all his army slain by the sword, saith the Lord God. 32. For I have caused my terror in the land of the living: and he shall be laid in the midst of the uncircumcised with them that are slain with the sword, even Pharaoh, and all his multitude, saith the Lord God.

This prophecy concludes and completes the bursting of Egypt, and leaves it and all its multitude in the pit of destruction. We are here invited to attend the funeral of that once flourishing kingdom, to lament its fall, and to take a view of one who attend it to the grave, and accompany it in the grave. This dead corpse of a kingdom is here, I. Brought to the grave. The prophet is ordered to cast them down to the pit, (v. 18.) to foretell it as one that had authority, as Jeremiah was set over the kingdoms, Jer. 1. 10. He must speak in God's name, and as from him who will cast them down. Ye must foretell it as one that had an affectionate concern for them; he must well for the multitude of Egypt, even when he casts them down. When Egypt is slain, let her have an honourable funeral, befitting her quality; let her be buried with the daughters of the famous nations, in their burying-places, and with the same ceremony; it is but a poor alloy to the reproach and terror of death, to be buried with those that were famous; yet this
s all that is allowed to Egypt. Shall Egypt think to exempt herself from the common fate of proud and impious nations? No, she must take her lot with them; (v. 19.) "Whom dost thou pass in beauty? Art thou so much fairer than any other nation, that thou shouldst expect therefore to be excused? No, others, as fair as thou, are sunk into the pit; go down therefore, and be thou laid with the uncircumcised. Thou art like them, and must lie among them; the multitude of Egypt shall all fall in the midst of them that are slain with the sword, now that there is a general slaughter made among them. Art thou so proud as to think to drink of the bloody cup, and therefore she is delieved to the sword, to the sword of war, (but, in God's hand, the sword of justice,) is delivered to be publicly executed. Draw her and all her multitude; either draw them as the dead bodies of great men are drawn in honour to the grave, in a Hearse; or, as malefactors are drawn in disgrace to the place of execution, on a sled; drew them to the pit, and let them be made a spectacle to the world.

II. This corpse of a kingdom is bid welcome to the grave, and Pharaoh is made free of the congregation of the dead, and admitted into their regions, not without some pomp and ceremony, as the surprising fall of the king of Babylon is illustrated, Hos. x. 5. But Egypt is proper for the illustrious coming, and to introduce thee into those mansions of darkness, Isa. xiv. 8, &c. so here; (v. 21.) They shall speak to him out of the midst of hell, as it were congratulating his arrival, and calling him to join with them, in acknowledging that which neither he nor they would be brought to own when they were in their pomp and pride, that it is in vain to think of any of themselves; for the hardness of their hearts against him, and prospered. They shall say to him, and to him that pretended to help him, Where are you now? What have you brought your attempts to at last?

Divers nations are here mentioned as gone down to the grave before Egypt, that are ready to give her a scornful reception, and upbraid her with coming to them at last; these nations here spoken of, probably, were such as had been of late years ruined and wasted by the king of Babylon, and their princes cut off: let Egypt know that she has neighbour's fare. When she goes to the grave, she does but migrate ad flares—migrate to the majority; there are innumerable before her. But it is observed, that Egypt was, and long inglorious; and though that is a great part about this time, or a little before, utterly ruined and laid waste, yet they are not mentioned here among the nations that welcome Egypt to the pit; for though they suffered the same things that these nations suffered, and by the same hand, yet the kind intentions of their affliction, and its happy issue at last, and the mercy God had yet in reserve for them, set them out of the way. It was not to have a going down to the pit, as it was to the heathen; they were not smitten as others were, nor slain according to the slaughter of other nations, Isa. xxvii. 7. But let us see who they are, that are gone to the grave before Egypt, that lie uncircumcised, slain by the sword, with whom she must now take up her lodging.

1. There lie the Assyrian empire, and all the princes and mighty men of that monarchy; (v. 22.) Ashur is there, and all her company, all the countries that were tributaries to, and had dependence upon, that crown. That mighty potentate, who used to lie in state, with his guards and grandees about him, now lies in obscurity, with his graves about him, and his soldiers in them, unable any longer to do him service or honour; they are all of them slain; fallen by the sword; the number of their months was cut off in the midst, and, being bloody and deceitful men, they were not suffered to live out half their days. Their graves were set in the sides of the pit, all in a row, like beds in a common chamber, v. 23. All their company is such, as were slain, fallen by the sword; a vast congregation of such who had caused terror in the land of the living; but as the death of those to whom they were a terror put an end to their fears, (in the grave the prisoners rest together, and hear not the voice of the oppressor, Job iii. 18.) so the death of these mighty men puts an end to their terrors; who is afraid of a dead lion? Note, Death will be a king of terrors, to all who are powerfully armed against him, and those who have made themselves terrors, in their generation.

2. There lies the kingdom of Persia, which, perhaps, within the memory of man that at that time, had been wasted and brought down; There is Elam and all her multitude, the king of Elam and his numerous armies, v. 24, 25. They also had caused their terror in the land of the living, had made a fearful noise and bluster among the nations their day. But Elam has now a grave by herself, and the graves of the common people round about her, fallen by the sword; she has her bed in the midst of the slain, that went down wr. uncircumcised, unsanctified, unholy, and not in covenant with God. They have borne their shame with them that go down to the pit, to be laid in the midst of the grave, and in the disgrace and mortification of mankind, that they die and are buried; nay, they die under particular marks of ignominy, which God and man put upon them. Note, They who cause their terror shall, sooner or later, bear their shame, and be made a terror to themselves. The king of Elam is put in the midst of them that are slain. All the honour he can now pretend to is, that they brought him down to his grave. But, (v. 26.) There lies the Scythian power, which, about this time, was busy in the world. Meshech and Tubal, those barbarous northern nations, had lately made a descent upon the Medes, and caused their terror among them, lived among them upon free quarter for some years, making every thing their own that they could lay their hands on; but, at length, Cyaxares, king of the Medes, drew them by a wile into his power, cut off abundance of them, and obliged them to quit his country, v. 26. There lie Meshech and Tubal, and all their multitude; there is a burying-place for them, with their chief commander in the midst of them, all of them uncircumcised, slain by the sword. These Scythians, that were long ingrained, and so near to the Medes, and other nations spoken of, before, in the bed of honour; (v. 27.) They shall not lie with the mighty, shall not be buried in state, as these are, even by consent of the enemy, that are slain in the field of battle, that go down to their graves with their weapons of war carried before the hearse, or trailed after it, that have particularly their swords laid by them, and their heads covered with their cloaks; as these were laid in the grave when they laid their heads on such a pillow; these Scythians are not buried with these marks of honour, but their iniquities shall be upon their sons; they shall, for their iniquity, be left unburied; though they were the terror even of the mighty in the land of the living.

3. There lies the kingdom of Edom, which had flourished long, but, about this time, at least before the destruction of Egypt, was made quite desolate, as was fortoled, ch. xxi. 13. Among the septuples of the nations, there is Edom, v. 29. There lie, not dignified with monuments or inscriptions, but mingled with common dust, her kings and all her princes, her wise statesmen, (which Edom was famous for,) and her brave soldiers; these might be made the home of their graves, to be beneath the earth, her might are laid by them that were slain by the sword; their might could not prevent it, nay, their might helped to procure it, for that both encouraged them
5. There be the princes of the north, and all the Edomites. These were as well acquainted with maritime affairs as the Egyptians were; who relied much on that part of their strength, but they are gone down with the slain, (v. 30.) down to the pit.

Now they are ashamed of their might, ashamed to think how much they boasted of it, and trusted to it; and, as the Edomites with their might, so these with their terror, are laid with them that are slain by the sword, and are forced to take their lot with them. They bear their shame with them that go down to the pit, die in as much disgrace as those that are cut off by the hand of public justice.

Lastly, All this is applied to Pharaoh and the Egyptians, who have no reason to flatter themselves with hopes of tranquillity, when they see how the wisest, and wealthiest, and strongest of their neighbours have been laid waste; (v. 28.) 4. Yea, thou shalt be broken in the midst of the uncircumcised; which is, not that Pharaoh himself, but the nation of the uncircumcised nations, must expect to come down with them. (1.) It will be some extenuation of the miseries of Egypt, to observe that it has been the case of so many great and mighty nations before; (v. 31.) Pharaoh shall see them, and be comforted; it will be some ease to his mind, that he is not the first king that has been slain in battle; his not being the first arm that has been broken, his not being the first kingdom that has been made desolate. Mr. Greenhill observes here, ‘The comfort which wicked ones have after death, is poor comfort, not real, but imaginary.’ They will find little satisfaction in having so many fellow-sufferers; the rich man in hell dreaded it. It is only in point of honour that Pharaoh can see, and be comforted. (2.) But nothing will be an exemption from this mighty retribution. (2.) But I have caused methem terror in the land of the living. Great men have caused their terror, have studied how to make every body fear them, Oedirin dum menatun—Let them hate, so that they do but fear. But now the great God has caused his terror in the land of the living; and therefore he laughs at theirs, because he sees that his day is coming, Ps. xxxvi. 15. In this day of terror, Pharaoh and all his multitude shall be laid with them that are slain by the sword.

The view which this prophecy gives us of ruined states, may show us something. [1.] Of this present world, and the empire of death in it. Come, and see the calamities of human life; see what a dying world this is; the strong die, the mighty die, Pharaoh and all his multitude. See what a killing world this is, Gal. vi. 7. But I have caused methem terror in the land of the living. As if men did not die fast enough of themselves, men are ingenious at finding out ways to destroy one another. It is not only a great pit, but a great cock-pit. [2.] Of the other world; though it is the destruction of nations as such, that perhaps is principally intended here, yet here is a plain allusion to the final and everlasting ruin of impious kings, that shall slay and be slain by the sword of the Lord, Ezek. xxxv. 7. And now a that Jerusalem is taken, two years after, he is appointed again to direct his speech to them; and here his commission is renewed. If God had abandoned them quite, he would not have sent prophets to them; nor if he had not had mercy in store for them, would he have showed them such things as these. In these verses we have,

CHAP. XXXIII.

The prophet is now come off his circuit, which he went as judge, in God’s name, to try and pass sentence upon the neighbouring nations, and, having finished with them, and read them all their doom, in the eight chapters foregoing, he now returns to the children of his people, and receives further instructions what to say to them. 1. He must let them know what office he was in among them as a prophet; that he was a watchman, and had received a charge concerning them, for which he was accountable, v. 1.-9. The substance of this we had before, ch. iii. 17, &c. 11. He must let them know upon what terms they stand with God, that they were upon trial, upon their good behaviour; that if a righteous man apostatise he shall perish, but that if a righteous man apostatise he shall perish, v. 10.-20. III. Here is a particular message sent to those who yet remained in the land of Israel, and which was more immediate, and grew secure there, and confident that they should take root there again, to tell them that their hopes would fail them, because they persisted in their sins, v. 21.-25. IV. Here is a relation to those who personally attended Ezekiel’s ministry, but were not sincere in their professions of devotion, v. 30.-33.
The office of a watchman laid down, the trust reposed in him, the charge given him, and the conditions annexed between him and those that employ him.

1. It is supposed to be a public danger, that gives occasion for the appointing of a watchman—when God brings the sword upon a land, v. 2. The sword of war, whenever it comes upon a land, is of God's bringing; it is the sword of the Lord, of his justice, how unjustly soever men draw it. At such a time the mouth of the watchman is opened, though he be held in invasion, that they may be informed of all the motions of the enemy, may not be surprised with an attack, but may have early notice of it, in order to their being at their arms, and in readiness to give the invader a warm reception, they set a man of their coast, some likely person, that lives upon the borders of their country, where the threatened danger is expected, and is therefore well acquainted with all the avenues of it, and make him their watchman. Thus wise are the children of this world in their generation. Note, One man may be of public service to a whole country. Princes and statesmen are the watchmen of a kingdom, that are continually to employ themselves, and, if occasion be, as watchmen, to expose themselves, for the public service.

2. It is supposed to be a public trust that is lodged in the watchman, and that he is accountable to the public for the discharge of it. His business is, (1.) To discover the approaches and advances of the enemy; and therefore he must not be blind or asleep, for then he cannot see the sword coming. (2.) To give notice of them immediately by sound of trumpet or, as sentinels among us, by the discharge of a gun, as a signal of danger. A special trust and confidence is reposed in him by those that set him to be their watchman, that he will faithfully do these two things; and they venture their lives upon his fidelity. Now, [1.] If he do his part, if he be betimes aware of all the dangers that fall within his cognizance, and give warning of them, he has discharged his trust, and has not only delivered his soul, but earned his wages. If the people do not take warning, if they either will not believe the notice he gives them, will not believe the danger to be so great, or so near, as really it is, or will not regard it, and so are surprised by the enemy in their security, it is their own fault; the blame is not to be laid upon the watchman, but their blood is upon their own head. If any person goes presumptuously about to turn the warning of a watchman to his own disrepute, the note of the sound of the trumpet, and was told by it where the danger was, and so the sword comes, and takes him away in his folly, he is a foolish man, he has destroyed himself. But, [2.] If the watchman do not do his duty; if he might have seen the danger and did not, but was asleep or heedless, or looking another way or, if he did see it, and gave notice of it, but said it was only for his own safety, and blew not the trumpet to warn the people; so that some are surprised and cut off in their iniquity, (v. 6.) cut off suddenly, without having time to cry, Lord, have mercy upon me, time to repent and make their peace with God; (which makes the matter much the worse, that the poor creature is taken away in his iniquity,) he shall be held guilty of his death, because he did not give him warning of his danger. But if the watchman do his part, and the people do theirs, all is well; both he that gives warning and he that takes warning, have delivered their soul.

II. The application of this to the prophet, v. 7.-9.

1. He is a watchman to the house of Israel. He had occasionally given warning to the nations about, but to the house of Israel he was a watchman by office, for they were the children of the prophets and covenant, and God made use of him, as the people of the land did, v. 2. (For they were not so wise for their souls, to secure the welfare of them, as they would have been for the protection of their temporal interests.) But God did it for them; he appointed them a watchman.

2. His business as a watchman is, to give warning to sinners of their misery and danger by reason of their sin, and to exhort them to come to God, and to turn to him, and say to them. (1.) God has said, The wicked man shall surely die; he shall be miserable; unless he repent, he shall be cut off from God, and all comfort and hope in him shall be cut off from all good. He shall fall, and lie for ever under the wrath of God, which is the death of the soul, as his favour is its life. The righteous God has said it shall stand forever, though they call all the world gain say it, that the wages of sin is death. Sin, when it is finished, brings forth death. The wrath of God is revealed from heaven, not only against wicked nations, speaking ruin to them as nations, but against wicked persons, speaking ruin to them in their personal capacity, their personal interests which pass into the other world, and last to eternity. The national interests do not. (2.) It is the will of God that the wicked man should be warned of this, warn them from me: which intimates that there is a possibility of preventing it, else it were a jest to give warning of it, and that God is desirous it should be prevented. Sinners are therefore warned of the wrath to come, that they may flee from it, Matth. iii. 7. (3.) It is the work of ministers to give him warning to say to the wicked, It shall be ill with thee, Isa. iii. 11. God says in general, The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The minister's business is, to apply this to particular persons, and to say, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die, whoever thou art; if thou go on still in the trespasses, they will inevitably be thy ruin. O adulterer, O robber, O drunkard, O swearer, O sabbath-breaker, thou shalt surely die. And he must say this, not in passion, to provoke the sinner, but in compassion, to warn the wicked from his way, warn him to turn from it, that he may live. This is to be done by the faithful preaching of the word in public, and by personal application to those whose sins are open.

3. If souls perish through his neglect of his duty, he brings guilt upon himself; if the prophet did not give warning to his people, he is as guilty as the wicked, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; for though the watchman did not do his part, yet the sinner might have taken warning from the written word, from his own conscience, and from God's judgments upon others, by which his mouth shall be stopped, and God will be justified in his destruction. Note, It will not serve impenitent sinners to say it was the watchman's business to give warning, the sinner did not give them warning, that they were careless and unfaithful; for though they were so, it will be made to appear that God left not himself without witness. But he shall not perish alone in his iniquity, the watchman also shall be called to an account; His blood will I require at the hand of the blind leader shall stand with him. The blind leader shall be taken away from the sight of the followers into the ditch, and the just desire of God has the destruction of sinners, in that he resents it so ill, if these concerned do not what they can to prevent their destruction. And see what a great deal those ministers have to answer for another day, who palliate sin, and flatter sinners in their evil way, and by their wicked lives countenance and harden them in their wickedness, and encourage them to believe that they shall have grace enough to go on.

4. If he do his duty, he may take the comfort of
it, though he do not see the success of it; (v. 9.)
"If thou warest the wicked of his way, if thou tell
him faithfully what will be the end thereof, and call
him earnestly to turn from it, and he do not turn,
but persist in it, he shall die in his iniquity, and the
fair warning given him will be an aggravation of
his sin and ruin; but thou hast delivered thy soul." Note, It is a comfort to ministers, that they may
through grace save themselves, though they cannot
be instrumental to save so many as they wish of those
that hear them.

10. Therefore, O thou son of man, speak
unto the house of Israel, Thus ye speak,
saying, If our transgressions and our sins be
upon us, and we pine away in them, how
should we then live? 11. Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no
pleasure in the death of the wicked; but
that the wicked turn from his way and live:
turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; for
why will ye die, O house of Israel? 12.
Therefore, thou son of man, say unto the
children of thy people, The righteousness of
the righteous shall not deliver him in the
day of his transgression; as for the wicked-
ness of the wicked, he shall not fall thereby
in the day that he turneth from his wicked-
ness; neither shall the righteous be able to
live for his righteousness in the day that he
sineth. 13. When I shall say to the right-
ceous, that he shall surely live; if he trust
to his own righteousness and commit iniquity,
all his righteousness shall not be remembered;
but for his iniquity that he hath com-
mitted, he shall die for it. 14. Again, when
I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely
die; if he turn from his sin, and do that
which is lawful and right; 15. If the wicked
restore the pledge, give again that he hath
robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without
committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he
shall not die. 16. None of his sins that he
hath committed shall be mentioned unto him:
he hath done that which is lawful and
right; he shall surely live. 17. Yet the
children of thy people say, The way of the
Lord is not equal: but, as for them, their
way is not equal. 18. When the righteous
turneth from his righteousness and commit-
eth iniquity, he shall even die thereby. 19.
But if the wicked turn from his wickedness,
and do that which is lawful and right, he
shall live thereby. 20. Yet ye say, The
way of the Lord is not equal. O ye house
of Israel, I will judge you every one after
his ways.

These verses are the substance of what we had
before, (ch. xviii. 20, &c.) and they are so full and
express a declaration of the terms on which people
stand with God, (as the former were of the terms
on which ministers stand,) that it is no wonder that
they are here repeated, as those were, though we
had the substance of them before. Observe here,

I. The covenants of the people against God's pro-
ceedings with them. God was now in his pro-
duction of the interceding with them, but their unremor-
cised hearts were not as yet humbled, for we were
industrious to justify themselves, though thereby
they reflected on God. Two things they insisted
upon, in their reproaches of God, and in both they
inquired into their sin, and misery to their
punishment.

1. They quarrelled with his promises and favours,
as having no kindness or sincerity in them, v. 10.
God had made them, before they pleaded, that he
had set it out of their reach, and therefore did but
mock them with the mention of it. The prophet
had said, some time ago, (ch. xxxiv. 25.) Ye shall
be made away for your iniquities; with that word he
had concluded his threatenings against Judah and
Jerusalem; and this they now upbraided him with,
as if it had been spoken absolutely, to drive them to
despair; whereas it was spoken conditionally, to
bring them to repentance. Thus are the sayings
of God's ministers perverted by men of corrupt minds,
who are minded to pick quarrels. He puts them
in hopes of life and happiness; and therein they
would make him contradict himself; "For" (say they)
"if our transgressions and our sins be upon us, as
thou hast often told us they are; and if we must,
as we are to all intents and purposes, be made
dead away in them, and wear out a miserable captivity in a fruitless repentance, how
shall we then live? If this be our doom, there is no
remedy. We die, we perish, we all perish." Note,
It is very common for those that have been harden-
ced with presumption when they were warned against
sin, to sink into despair when they are called to rep-
ent, and to conclude there is no hope of life for
them.

2. They quarrelled with his threatenings and
judgments, as having no justice or equity in them.
They said, The way of the Lord is not equal, (v. 17,
20.) suggesting that God was partial in his pro-
ceedings, and that with him there was respect of
persons, and that he was more severe against sin
and sinners than there was cause.

II. Here is a satisfactory answer given to both
these ends.

1. Those that despairs of finding mercy with
God, are here answered with a solemn declara-
tion of God's readiness to show mercy, v. 11. When
they spake of being away in their iniquity, God
sends the prophet to them, with all speed, to tell
them that though their case was sad, it was not
desperate, but there was yet hope in Israel. (1.)
It is certain that God has no delight in the minds
of sinners, nor does he desire it; if they will destroy
themselves, he will glorify himself in it, but he has
no pleasure in it, but would rather they should turn
and live, for his goodness is that attribute of
which is most his glory, which is most his delight.
He would rather sinners should turn and live, than
go on and die. He has said it, he has sworn it; that
a man may be destroyed in his wickedness is
impossible for God to lie, we might have strong
consolation; we have his word and his oath; and
since he could swear by no greater, he swears
by himself, As I live. They questioned whether
they should live, though they did repent and re-
form; Yea, says God, as sure as I live, true peni-
tents shall live also; for their sakes, though they be
made to suffer with Christ in God's house, (v. 13.)
It is certain that God is just in his judgments, and
in earnest, in the calls he gives sinners to repent;
Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil way. To repent
is to turn from our evil way; this God requires
sinners to do; this he urges them to do, by repeated
pressing instances; Turn ye, turn ye. O that they
would be prevailed with to turn, to turn quickly,
without delay! This he will enable them to do, if
they will but frame their desirings to turn to the Lord,
Hos. v. 4. For he has said, I will pour out my Spirit unto you, Prov. i. 23. And in this he will accept of them; for it is not only with the heathen, but what he is doing to his is to himself; they die, because they will die; and they will read the justice of it. The Jewish nation, a nation, was now dead, it was ruined to all intents and purposes. The prophet must therefore deal with particular persons, and the rule of judging concerning them is much like that concerning a nation, Jer. xvii. 7—10. If God speak concerning it, to build and to plant; if it do wickedly, he will recall his favours, and leave it to ruin. But if he speak concerning it, to pluck up and destroy, and to repent, he will revoke the sentence, and deliver it.

So it is here. In short, the most plausible professors, if they apostatize, shall certainly perish for ever; whereas God, from mercy, may pardon many sinners, if they repent, shall certainly be happy for ever in their return to God. This is here repeated again and again, because it ought to be again and again considered, and preached over to our own hearts. This was necessary to be inculcated upon this stupid, senseless people, that, 

The way of the Lord is not equal; for these rules of judging are so plainly just, that they need no other confirmation of them than the repetition of them.

(1.) If those that have made a great profession of religion, throw off their profession, quite the good ways of God, and grow loose and carnal, and sensual, and worldly, the profession they made, and all the religious performances with which they had for a great while kept up the credit of their profession, shall stand them in no stead, but they shall certainly perish in their iniquity, v. 12, 13, 18.

[1.] God says to the righteous man, that he shall surely live, v. 13. He says it by his word, by his ministers; he that lives regularly, his own heart tells him, his neighbours tell him, He shall live. Surely such a man as this cannot but be happy. And it is certain, if he proceed and persevere in his right and good way, he shall be happy in his own heart, right and sincere in it, if he be really as good as he seems to be, he shall live; he shall continue in the love of God, and be for ever happy in that love.

[2.] Righteous men, who have very good hopes of themselves, and whom others have a very good opinion of, are yet in danger of turning to iniquity, by trusting to their righteousness. So the case is here; if he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, and come to make a trade of sin; if he not only take a false step, but turn aside into a false way, and persist in it—this may possibly be the case of a righteous man, and it is the effect of his trusting to his own righteousness. Note, Many eminent professors have been ruined by a proud conceit of themselves, and confidence in themselves, and a trust in their own righteousness, and think, he has already made God so much his Debtor, that now he may venture to commit iniquity, for he has righteousness enough in stock to make amends for it; he fancies that whatever evil deeds he may do hereafter, he can be in no danger from them, having so many good deeds beforehand to balance them. Or, He trusts to the strength of his own righteousness; thinks himself now so well established in a course of virtue, that he may thrust himself into any temptation, and it cannot overcome him, and so by presuming on his own sufficiency he is brought to commit iniquity. By making bold on the confines of sin, he is drawn at length into the deeps of sin. This ruined the Pharisees, for they trusted to themselves that they were righteous, and that their long prayers, and fasting twice in the week, would atone for their devouring widow’s houses.

[3.] If righteous men turn to iniquity, and return not to their righteousness, they shall certainly perish in their iniquity, and all the righteousness they have formerly done, all their prayers, and all their reformation, for ever, for no remembrance of, no, no, no. God told the people, for they made, no remembrance had, of their good deeds, they shall be overlooked, as if they had never been. The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him from the wrath of God, and the curse of the law, in the day of his transgression. When he becomes a transgressor and a rebel, and takes up arms against his rightful Sovereign, it will not serve for him to plead, in his own defence, that formerly he was a loyal subject, and did many good services to the government: no, he shall not be able to live; the remembrance of his former righteousness shall be no satisfaction either to God’s justice or his own conscience, in the day that he sins, but rather shall, in the estimate of both, highly aggravate the sin and deserve the punishment of it. And therefore, says God, turn you to me that I may heal you. And again, (v. 18.) He shall even die thereby; and it is owing to himself.

(2.) If those that have lived a wicked life, repent and reform, forsake their wicked ways and become religious, their sins shall be pardoned, and they shall be justified and saved, if they persevere in their reformation.

[1.] God says to the wicked, Thou shalt surely die. The way that thou art in leads to destruction. The wages of thy sin is death, and thine iniquity will shortly be thy ruin.” It was said to the righteous man, Thou shalt surely live, for his encouragement to proceed and persevere in the way of righteousness; but he made an ill use of it, and was imboldened by it to commit iniquity. It was said to the wicked man, Thou shalt surely die, for warning to him not to persist in his wicked ways; and he makes a good use of it, and is quickened thereby to return to God and duty. Thus, even the threatenings of the word are to some, by the grace of God, a savour of life unto life, while even the promises of the word become to others, by their own corruption, a savour of death unto death. When God says to the wicked man, Thou shalt surely die, eternally, it is to frighten him, not out of his ways, but out of his sins.

[2.] There is many a wicked man who was hastening apace to his own destruction, who yet is wrought upon by the grace of God to return and repent, and live a holy life. He turns from his sin, (v. 14.) and is resolved that he will have no more to do with it; and, as an evidence of his repentance for what wrong done, he restores the pledge (v. 15.) which he had taken uncharitably from the poor; he gives again that which he had robbed and taken unjustly from the rich. Nor does he only cease to do evil, but he learns to do well; he does that which is lawful and right, and makes conscience of his duty both to God and man. And so, as much as he is able to do, he neither feared God nor regarded man. But many such amazing changes, and blessed ones, have been wrought by the power of divine grace; he that was going on in the paths of death and destruction, now walks in the statutes of life, in the way of God’s commandments, which have life in it, (Prov. xvi. 28.) and life at the end of it, Matt. xix. 17. And in this good way he perseveres, without committing iniquity; though not free from remaining infirmity, yet under the dominion of no iniquity.
He repents not of his repentance, nor returns to the commission of those gross sins which he before allowed himself in.

[3.] He that does thus repent and return, shall escape the ruin he was running into, and his former sins shall be no prejudice to his acceptance with God. Let him not pine away in his iniquity, for if he confess and forsake it, he shall find mercy. He shall surely live, he shall not die, v. 15. Again, (v. 16.) He shall surely live. Again, (v. 19.) He has done that which is lawful and right, and shall live thereby. But will not his wickedness be remembered against him? No, he shall not be punished for them, v. 12. As for the wickedness of the wicked, though it was very heinous, yet he shall not fall thereby, in the day that he turns from his wickedness. Now that it is become his grief, it shall not be his ruin. Now that there is a settled separation between him and sin, there shall be no longer a separation between him and God. Nay, he shall not be so much as upbraided with them, v. 16. None of his sins that he has committed shall be mentioned unto him, either as a clog to his pardon, or an almsy to the comfort of it, or any blemish and diminution to the glory that is prepared for him.

Now lay all this together, and then judge whether the way of the Lord be not equal; whether this will not justify God in the destruction of his enemies, and glorify him in the execution of his judgments. The conclusion is, the whole matter is, (v. 20.) "O ye house of Israel, though ye are all involved now in the common calamity, yet there shall be a distinction of persons made in the spiritual and eternal state, and I will judge you every one after his ways. Though they were sent into captivity by the hand of God, good fish and had enclosed in the same net, yet there he will separate between the precious and the vile, and will render to every man according to his works. Therefore God's way is equal and unexceptionable; but as for the children of thy people, God turns them over to the prophet, as he did to Moses; (Exod. xxxxi. 7.) "They are thy people, I will scarcely own them for mine." As for them, their way is unequal; this way which they have got of quarrelling with God and his prophets, is absurd and unreasonable. In all disputes between God and his creatures, it will certainly be found that he is in the right, and they are in the wrong.

21. And it came to pass in the twelfth year of our captivity, in the tenth month, in the fifth day of the month, that one that had escaped out of Jerusalem came unto me, saying, The city is smitten. 22. Now the hand of the Lord was upon me in the evening, afore he that was escaped came, and had opened my mouth, until he came to me in the morning, and my mouth was opened, and I was no more dumb. 23. Then the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, 24. Son of man, they that inhabit those wastes of the land of Israel speak, saying, Abraham was one, and he inherited the land: but we are many; the land is given us for inheritance. 25. Wherefore say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God, Ye eat with the blood, and lift up your eyes toward your idols, and shed blood: and shall ye possess the land? 26. Ye stand upon your sword, ye work abomination, and ye defile every one his neighbour's wife: and shall ye possess the land? 27. Say thou unto them, Thus saith the Lord God, Is it, surely they that are in the wastes shall fall by the sword; and him that is in the open field will I give to the beasts to be devoured; and they that be in the forts, and in the caves, shall die of the pestilence. 28. For I will lay the land most desolate, and the pomp of her strength shall cease; and the mountains of Israel shall be desolate, that none shall pass through. 29. Then shall they know that I am the Lord, when I have laid the land most desolate, because of all their abominations, which they have committed.

Here we have,

I. The tithings brought to Ezekiel of the burning of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans. The city was burnt in the eleventh year of the captivity, and the fifth month, Jer. li. 13. Tithings hereof were brought to the prophet by one that was an eye-witness of the destruction, in the twelfth year, and the tenth month, (v. 21.) which was a year and almost five months after the thing was done; we may well suppose that, there being a constant correspondence, at this time more than ever, kept up between Jerusalem and Babylon, he had heard the news long before. But this was the first time he had an account from a refugee, from one who escaped, who could be particular, and would be faithful, in the narrative of it. And the sign given him was, the coming of such a one to him as had himself narrowly escaped the flames; (ch. xxiv. 26.) He that escapes in that day, shall come unto thee, to cause thee to hear it with thine ears, to hear it more distinctly than ever, from one that could say, Quaeque ipsa misererrima vidit—These miserable scenes I saw.

II. The divine impressions and influences he was under, to prepare him for those heavy tithings; (v. 22.) The hand of the Lord was upon me before he came, and had opened my mouth to speak to the house of Israel what we had in the former part of this chapter; and now he was more aware than ever, that he prophesied more with more freedom and boldness, because by the event proved a true prophet, to the confusion of those that contradicted him. All the prophecies from ch. 24. to this chapter, having revelation purely to the nations about, it is probable that the prophet, when he received them from the Lord, did not deliver them by word of mouth, but in writing; for he could not say to the Ammonites, Say unto Tyre, Say unto Pharaoh, &c. so and so, but by letters directed to the persons concerned; as Zacharias, when he could not speak, wrote; and herein he was as truly executing his prophetic office as ever. Note, Even silenced ministers may be doing a great deal of good by writing letters and making visits. But now the prophet's mouth is opened, that he may speak to the children of his people. It is probable that he had, during these years, been continually speaking to them as a friend, putting them in mind of what he had formerly delivered to them, but that he never spake to them as a prophet, by inspiration, till now, when the hand of the Lord came upon him, renewed his commission, gave him fresh instructions, and opened his mouth, furnished him with power to speak to the people as he was sent to work.

III. The particular message he was intrusted with, relating to those Jews that yet remained in the land of Israel, and inhabited the wastes of that land, v. 24. See what work sin had made; the
ieties of Israel were now become the wastes of Is-
rael, for they lay all in ruins; some few that had
escaped the sword and captivity, still continued
there, and began to think of re-settling. This was
so long after the destruction of Jerusalem, that it
was some time before this, that Gedaliah (a modest,
humble man) and his friends were slain; but, pro-
ably, not this time. Jermaine, and the proud men
that joined with him, were at the height, (Jer. xlvi.
2.) and before they came to a resolution to go into
Egypt, wherein Jeremiah opposed them, it is prob-
able that the project was to establish themselves
in the wastes of the land of Israel, in which Ezekiel
here opposed them, and probably despatched the
message away by the person that brought him the
news of Jerusalem's destruction. Or, perhaps, those
here prophesied against might be some other party
of Jews, that remained in the land, hoped to take
root there, and be sole masters of it, after Joh-
man and his forces were gone into Egypt.
Now here we have,
1. An account of the pride of these remaining
Jews, who dwell in the wastes of the land of Israel.
The pride of the pride of God's people had been very
humble, and still was very threat-
ening, yet they were intolerably haughty and se-
cure, and promised themselves peace. He that
brought the news to the prophet, that Jerusalem
was smitten, could not tell him (it is likely) what
these people said, but God tells him, They say,
'The land is given us for our inheritance,' ver. 21.
Our Nature, when we should be the objects of our
survival; or, for want of heirs, it comes to us
as occupant; we shall now be placed alone in the
midst of the earth, and have it all to ourselves.'
This argues great stupidity under the weighty hand
of God, and a reigning selfishness, and narrow-spir-
tedness; they pleased themselves in the ruin of
their country as long as they hoped to find their own
acceptance in it; cared not though it were all waste,
so that they might have the sole property; a poor
inheritance to be proud of! They have the impudence
to compare their case with Abraham's, glorifying in
this, 'We have Abraham to our father.' Abraham,
say they, 'was one, one family, and he inherited
the land, and lived many years in the peaceable en-
joyment of it; but we are many, many families,
more than they; and, therefore, he is not fit to
have it, for we be the inheritance.' (1.) They think they can make out as
good a title from God to this land as Abraham
could; 'If God gave this land to him, who was but
one worshipper of him, as a reward of his service,
much more will he give it to us, who are many
worshippers of him, as the reward of our service.'
This speaks the great conceit they had of their own
merits, if they were greater than those of Abra-
ham their father, who yet was not justified by
works. (2.) They think they can make good the
possession of this land against the Chaldeans and
all other invaders, as well as Abraham could against
those that were competitors with him for it; 'If he,
who was but one, could hold it, much more shall
we, who are many, and have many more at com-
mand than his three hundred trained servants.'
This speaks the confidence they had in their own
might; they had got possession, and were resolved
to keep it.
2. A check to this pride. Since God's providences
did neither humble them nor terrify them, he sends
them a message sufficient to do both.
1. To humble them, he tells them of the quick-
ened, roused, his tender, Juda, which rendered them
utterly unworthy to possess this land, so that they
could not expect God should give it them. They
had been followed with one judgment after another,
but they had not profited by those of grace
so as might be expected; they were still unform'd,
and how could they expect that they should possess
the land? 'Shall ye possess the land? What! such
wicked people as ye are? How shall I put thee
among the children, and give thee a pleasant land?'
(2.) To terrify them, he tells them of the four
more judgments, ch. xiv. 15. [3.] They that are in the fords and in the
caves, that think themselves safe in artificial or
natural fastnesses, because men's eyes cannot discover
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them, or men's darts reach them, there the arrows of the Almighty shall find them out; they shall die of the pestilence. [4.] The whole land, even the land of Israel, that had been the glory of all lands, shall be most desolate, v. 28. It shall be desolation, desolation, all over as desolate as desolation itself can make it. Thus the mount Zion itself, the holy mountain not excepted, shall be desolate, the roads unfrequented, the houses uninhabited, that none shall pass through; as it was threatened, (Deut. xxxviii. 62.) Ye shall be left few in number. [5.] The pomp of her strength, whatever she glories in as her foundation, and trust to as her strength, shall be made to cease. [6.] They shall not say, We have made ourselves rich, as though this were any achievement of their own; it is not made by them, all their abominations which they have committed. It is sin that does all this mischief, that makes nations desolate; and therefore we ought to call it an abomination. [7.] Yet the effect of all this will be very good; Then shall they know that I am the Lord, am their Lord, and shall return to their allegiance, when I have made the land most desolate. Those are untractable and unthankful, that are not made to know their dependence upon God, when all their creature-comforts fail them, and are made desolate.

30. Also, thou son of man, the children of thy people still are talking against thee by the walls, and in the doors of the houses, and speak one to another, every one to his brother, saying, Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word that cometh forth from the Lord. 31. And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness. 32. And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not. 33. And when this cometh to pass, (lo, it will come,) then shall they know that a prophet hath been among them.

The foregoing verses speak conviction to the Jews who remained in the land of Israel, who were monuments of sparing mercy; and yet returned not to the Lord; in these verses, these are reproved who were now in captivity in Babylon, under divine rebukes, and yet were not reformed by them. They are not indeed charged with the same gross enormities that the others are charged with: they made some show of religion and devotion; but their hearts were not right with God. The thing they are here accused of is, mocking the messengers of the Lord; one of their measure-filling sins, which brought this ruin upon them, and yet they were not cured of it.

I. By invasions, ill-natured reflections upon him, privately among themselves, endeavouring by all means possible to render him despicable.

The prophet did not know it, but charitably thought that they who spake so well of him to his face, with so much seeming respect and deference, would surely not speak ill of him behind his back. But God comes, and unto them saith, The children of bad people are still talking against thee, (v. 50.) or talking of thee, no good, I doubt. Note, Public persons are a common theme or subject of discourse; every one takes a liberty to censure them at pleasure; and faithful ministers know not how much ill is said of them every day; it is well that they do not; for if they did, it might prove a discouragement to them in their work, not to be easily got over. But God takes notice of all that is said against his ministers; not only what is decreed against them, or sworn against them, not only what is written against them, or extolled against them, but of what is said against them. God speaks to their conversations, among neighbours when they meet in the evening, by the walls and in the doors of their houses; where whatever freedom of speech they use, if they reproach and slander any of God's ministers, God will reckon with them for it; his prophets shall not be made the song of the drunkards always. They have given their public charge to their prophetic charge, but they loved to talk of him in a carelessly, flippantly, bantering way; they said jokingly, "Come, and let us hear what is the word that cometh forth from the Lord; perhaps it will be something new, and will entertain us, and furnish us with matter of discourse." Note, Those have arrived at a great pitch of profaneness, who can make so great a privilege, and so great a duty, as the preaching and hearing the word of God, a matter of ridicule; yea, though it be not done publicly, but in private conversation among themselves. Serious things should be spoken of seriously.

11. By dissembling with him in their attendance upon his ministry. Hypocrites mock God, and mock his prophets. But their hypocrisy is often before God, and the day is coming when, as here, it will be laid open. Observe here, 1. The plausible profession which these people made, and the speciousness of their pretensions. They are like those (Matth. xx. 6.) who draw nigh to God with their mouths, and honour him with their lips, but their hearts are far from him. (" They were diligent and constant in their attendance upon the means of grace. They came unto thee as the people came. In Babylon they had no temple or synagogue, but they went to the prophet's house, (ch. viii. 1.) and there, it is probable, they spent their new moons and their sabbaths in religious exercises, 2 Kings iv. 23. When the prophet was bound, the word of the Lord was not bound; and the people, when they had not the help for their souls that they wished for; were thankful for what they had; it was far more grateful to them than the boodles of these hypocrites came, according to the coming of the people, as duly and as early as any of the prophet's hearers. Their being said to come as the people came, seems to intimate that the reason why they came was, because other people came; they did not come out of conscience toward God, but only for company, for fashion-sake, and because it was now the custom of their countrymen. Note, Those that have no inward principle of love to God's ordinances, may yet be found much in the external observation of them. Cain brought his sacrifice as well as Abel; and the Pharisee went up to the temple to pray as well as the publican. (2.) They behaved themselves very decently and reverently in the public assembly; there were none of them whispering or laughing, or going about them or sleeping. But they sit before thee as my people, with all the shows of gravity, and seriousness, and composure of mind. They sit out the time, without weariness, or wishing the sermon done. (3.) They were very attentive to the word preached; "They are not thinking of something else, but they hear thy words, and take notice of what thou says." (4.) They pretended to have a great kindness and respect for the prophet. Though, behind his back, they could not give him a good word, yet, to his face, they showed much love to him and his doctrine; they pretended to have a great concern lest he should spend himself too much in preaching, or expose himself to the Chal.
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be a witness against them, that they had fair warning given them, but would not take it. When Ezekiel is gone, whom now they speak against, and there is no more any prophet, nor any to show them how long, then they will remember that once they had a prophet, but knew not how to use him well. 

2. The hypocrisy of these professions and pretensions; it is all a sham, it is all a jest. (1.) They have no cordial affection for the word of God. While they show much love, it is only with the mouth, from the teeth outward, but their hearts go after their covetousness, they are as much set upon that which will make them rich in the world as long as they can use it as ever. Hearing the word is only their diversion and recreation, a pretty amusement now and then for an hour or two. But still their main business is with their farm and merchandise, the bent and bias of their souls are toward them, and their inward thoughts are employed in projects about them. Nor, worldly affairs, is the reason this is so; their immunities and inordinate affections that make a great prey of religion; it is the love of the world that secretly cuts the love of God out of their hearts: the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches are the thorns that choke the seed, and choke the soul too. And those neither please God nor profit themselves, who, when they are hearing the word of God, are musing upon their worldly affairs. God has his eye on the hearts that do so. (2.) They yield no subject to it. They hear thy words, but it is only a hearing that they give thee, for they will not do them, v. 31. And again, (v. 32.) they do them not. They will not be persuaded by all the prophet can say, either by authority or argument, to cross themselves in any instance, to part with any one beloved sin, or apply themselves to that duty to which they were called, against the grain to flesh and blood. 

3. There are many who take pleasure in hearing the word, but make no conscience of doing it; and so they build upon the sand, and deceive themselves.

Lastly, Let us see what will be in the end hereof; Shall their unbelief and carelessness make the word of God of no effect? By no means. (1.) God will confirm the prophet's word, though they contradict it; and make light of it, v. 33. What he says will come to pass, and not one jot or one tittle shall fall to the ground. Note, The curses of the law, though they may be bantered by profane wits, cannot be baffled. (2.) They themselves shall rue their folly when it is too late. When it comes to pass, they shall know, shall know to their cost, know to their confusion, that a prophet has been among them, though they made no more of him than as one that had a pleasant voice. Note, Those who will not consider that a prophet is among them, and who improve not the day of their visitation while it is continued, will be made to remember that a prophet has been among them, when the things that belong to their peace are hid from their eyes. The day is coming when vain and worldly men will have other thoughts of things than now they have, and will feel a weight in that which they made light of. They shall know that a prophet has been among them, when they see the event exactly answer the prediction, and the prophet himself shall be a witness against them, that they had fair warning given them, but would not take it. When Ezekiel is gone, whom now they speak against, and there is no more any prophet, nor any to show them how long, then they will remember that once they had a prophet, but knew not how to use him well.

2. Their discharge from their trust, for their insufficiency and treachery, v. 10. 11. A great promise that God would take care of his flock, though they did not, and that it should not always suffer as it had, by their mal-administrations, v. 11.-16. IV. Another promise, that God would in the fulness of time send the Messiah, who would be a great and mighty shepherd of the sheep, who should redress all grievances, and set every thing to rights with the flock, v. 23. 31.

1. And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God unto the shepherds, Wo be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks? 3. Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock. 4. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away neither have ye sought that which was lost, but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them. 5. And they were scattered, because there is no shepherd: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field when they were scattered. 6. My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them.

The prophecy of this chapter is not dated, nor any of those that follow it, till chap. xl. It is most probable that it was delivered after the completing of Jerusalem's destruction, when it would be very seasonable to inquire into the causes of it.

1. The prophet is ordered to prophesy against the shepherds of Israel—the princes and magistrates, the priests and Levites, the great Sanhedrim or council of state, or whoever they were that had the direction of public affairs, in a higher or lower sphere; the kings especially, for there were two of them now captives in Babylon, who, as well as the people, must have their transgressions showed them,
that they might repent, as Manasseh in his captivity. God has something to say to the shepherds, for they are but under shepherds, accountable to him who is the great Shepherd of Israel. And that which he says is, *To the shepherds of Israel! Though they are shepherds, and shepherds of Israel, yet he must not spare them, must not flatter them. Note, If men's dignity and power do not, as they ought, keep them from sin, they will not serve to exempt them from reproof, to excuse their repentance, or to secure them from the judgments of God if they do not repent. We had a wo to the forefathers, Jer. xxviii. 1. God is a particular manner reckon with them if they be false to their trust.*

II. He is here directed what to charge the shepherds with, in God's name, as the ground of God's controversy with them; for it is not a causeless quarrel. Two things they are charged with,

1. That all their care was to advance and enrich themselves, and to make themselves great. Their business was to take care of those that were committed to their charge; *Should not the shepherds feed the flock? No doubt they should, but they betray their trust if they do not. Not that they are to put the meat into their mouths, but to provide it for them, and bring it to them. But these shepherds made this the least of their care, they fed themselves, consumed every thing to gratify and indulge their own appetite, and to make themselves rich and great, fat and easy. They made sure of the profits of their places, they did eat the fat, the cream; (so some:) for he that feeds a flock eats of the milk of it; (1 Cor. ix. 7.) and they made sure of the best of the milk. They made sure of the fleece, and clothed themselves with the wool, getting into their hands as much as they could of the estates of their subjects, yea, and killed them, that what they had might be fed upon, as Naboth was put to death for his vineyard. Note, There is a wo to those who are in public trusts, but consult only their own private interest, and are more inquisitive about the benefit than about the office, what money is to be got than what good is to be done. It is an old complaint, *All seek their own, and not the other's way.*

2. That they took no care for the benefit and welfare of those that were committed to their charge; *Ye feed not the flock.* They neither knew how to do it, so ignorant were they, nor would they take any pains to do it, so lazy and slothful were they; nay, they never desired or designed it, so treacherous and unfaithful were they.

(1.) They did not do their duty to those of the flock that were distempered, did not strengthen them, or heal them, or bind them up, v. 4. When any of the flock were sick or hurt, or wounded, it was all one to them whether they lived or died; they never looked after them. The princes and judges took no care to right those that suffered wrong, or to shelter injured innocency. They took no care to see that the poor were provided for; they might starve. These shepherds took no care to instruct the ignorant, to rectify the mistakes of those that were in error, to warn the unruly, or to comfort the feeble-minded. The ministers of state took no care to check the growing distempers of the kingdom, which threatened the vitals of it. Things were amiss, and out of course, every where, and nothing was done to rectify them.

(2.) They did not do their duty to those of the flock that were dispersed, that were driven away by the enemies that invaded the country, and were forced to seek for shelter where they could find a place; or that wandered of choice upon the mountains and hills, (v. 6.) where they were exposed to the beasts of prey, and became meat to them, v. 5.

Every one is ready to seize a waif and stray. Some went abroad and begg'd, some went abroad and traded, and thus the country became thin of inhabitants, and was weakened and impoverished, and wasted lands both in the fields of corn and in the fields of battle, both in harvest and in war; *My flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, v. 6. And they were never inquired after, were never encouraged to return to their own country; None did seek or search after them. Nay, with force and cruelty they ruled them, which drove more away, and discouraged those that were driven away, and thus the Lord was involved in more and more evil, and the country was worse and worse. That is the case of the flock: it is as bad as if it were without a shepherd. Better no shepherd than such shepherds.* Christ complains that his flock were as sheep, having no shepherd, when yet the Scribes and Pharisees sat in Moses's seat, Matth. ix. 36. It is ill with the patient when his physician is his worst disease; ill with the flock when the shepherds drive them away, and disperse them, by ruling them with force.

7. Therefore, ye shepherds, hear the word of the Lord; 8. As I live, saith the Lord God, surely because my flock became a prey, and my flock became meat to every beast of the field, because there was no shepherd, neither did my shepherds search for my flock, but the shepherds fed themselves, and fed not my flock: 9. Therefore, O ye shepherds, hear the word of the Lord; 10. Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I am against the shepherds; and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more: for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them. 11. For thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out. 12. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. 13. And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country. 14. I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall
Their fold be: there shall they lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel. 15. I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord Gop. 16. I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick: but I will destroy the fat and the strong; I will feed them with judgment.

Upon reading the foregoing articles of impeachment drawn up, in God's name, against the shepherds of Israel, we cannot but look upon the shepherds with a just indignation, and upon the flock with a tender compassion. God, by the prophet, here expresses both in a high degree; and the shepherds are called upon (v. 7, 9) to hear the word of the Lord, to hear this word. Let them hear how little he regards them who made much of themselves, and how much he regards the flock which they made nothing of; both will be humbling to them. Those that will not hear the word of the Lord giving them their direction, shall be made to hear the word of the Lord reading them their doom. Now see here,

1. How much displeased God is at the shepherds. They were not as instructed, v. 8. God's flock became a prey to the deceiver first that drew them to idolatry, and then to the destroyers that carried them into captivity; and these shepherds took no care to prevent either the one or the other, but were as if there had been no shepherds; and therefore God says it, (v. 10.) and confirms it with an oath; (v. 8.) I am against the shepherds. They had a commission from God to feed the flock, and they made use of his name in what they did, expecting he would stand by them: "No," says God, "so far from that, I am against them." Note, It is not our having the name and authority of shepherds, that will engage God for us, if we do not the work enjoined us, and be not faithful to the trust reposed in us. God is against them, and they shall know it; for a commission from God to feed the flock, is no counter or in which they have discharged their trust: "I will require my flock at their hands, and charge it upon them, that so many of them are missing." Note, Those will have a great deal to answer for in the judgment-day, who take upon them the care of souls, and yet take no care of them. Ministers must watch and work, as those that must give account, Heb. xii. 17. 2. They shall be deprived of all benefit—both of the work and of the wages. They shall cease from feeding the flock, from pretending to feed it. Note, It is just with God to take out of men's hands that power which they have abused, and that trust which they have betrayed. But if this were all their punishment, they could hear it well enough, therefore it is added, A further shall the shepherds feed themselves any more, for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, which, instead of protecting, they had made a prey of. Note, Those that are enriching themselves with the spoils of the public, cannot expect that they shall always be suffered to do so. Nor will God always permit his people to be trampled upon by those that should support them, but will find a time to deliver them from the shepherds their false friends, as well as from the lions their open enemies.

II. How much concerned God is for the flock; he speaks as if he were the more concerned for them, because he saw them thus neglected, for with him the fatherless finds mercy. Precious promises are made here upon the occasion, which were to have their accomplishment in the return of the Jews out of their captivity, and their re-establishment in their own land. Let the shepherds hear this word of the Lord, and know that they have no part or lot in the matter. But let the poor sheep hear it, and take the comfort of it. Note, The age regenerate and ministers fail in doing their part, for the good of the church, yet God will not fail in doing his; he will take the flock into his own hand, rather than the church shall come short of any kindness he has designed for it. The under shepherds may prove careless, but the Chief Shepherd neither slumbereth nor sleepeth. They may be false, but God abides faithful.
3. He will succor those that are hurt, will bind up that which was broken, and strengthen that which was sick, will comfort those that mourn in Zion and with Zion. If ministers, who should speak peace to those who are of a sorrowful spirit, neglect their duty, yet the Holy Ghost the Comforter will be faithful to his office. But, as it follows, the fat and the strong shall be destroyed. He that has rest for disquieted saints, has terror to speak to presumptuous sinners. As every valley shall be filled, so every mountain and hill shall be brought low, Luke iii. 5.

17. And as for you, O my flock, thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I judge between cattle and cattle, between the rams and the he-goats. 18. Seesth it a small thing unto you to have eaten up the good pasture, but ye must tread down with your feet the residue of your pastures? and to have drunk of the deep waters, but ye must foul the residue with your feet? 19. And as for my flock, they eat that which ye have trodden with your feet; and they drink that which ye have fouled with your feet. 20. Therefore, thus saith the Lord God unto them, Behold, I, even I, will judge between the fat cattle and between the lean cattle. 21. Because ye have thrust with side and with shoulder, and pushed all the diseased with your horns, till ye have scattered them abroad; 22. Therefore will I save my flock, and they shall no more be a prey; and I will judge between cattle and cattle. 23. And I will set up one Shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. 24. And I the Lord will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the Lord have spoken it. 25. And I will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land; and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods. 26. And I will make them, and the places round about my hill, a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season: there shall be showers of blessing. 27. And the tree of the field shall yield her fruit, and the earth shall yield her increase, and they shall be safe in their land, and shall know that I am the Lord, when I have broken the bands of their yoke, and delivered them out of the hand of those that served themselves of them. 28. And they shall no more be a prey to the heathen, neither shall the beasts of the land devour them: but they shall dwell safely, and none shall make them afraid. 29. And I will raise up for them a Plant of renown, and they shall be no more consumed with hunger in the land, neither bear the shame of the heathen any more. 30. Thus shall they know that I the Lord their God am with them, and that they, even the house of Israel, are my people, saith the Lord God. 31. And ye, my flock of my pasture, are men, and I am your God, saith the Lord God.

The prophet has no more to say to the shepherds, but he has now a message to deliver to the flock. God had ordered him to speak tenderly to them, and to assure them of the mercy he had in store for them. But here he is ordered to make a difference between such as were of his people to be saved, and others of them to be destroyed, between the precious and the vile, and then to give them a promise of the Messiah, by whom this distinction should be effectually made, partly at his first coming, for, for judgment he came into this world, (John xi. 39.) to fill the hungry with good things, and to send the rich empty away, Luke 1. 33. But this distinction shall be completely made at his second coming, when he shall, as it is here said, judge between the cattle and between the sheep, and divides between the sheep and the goats, and shall set the sheep on his right hand, and the goats on his left, (Matth. xxv. 32, 33.) which seems to have reference to this. We have here, 1. Conviction spoken to those of the flock that were fat and strong, the rams and the he-goats, v. 3. Those that, though they had not power, as shepherds and masters, to oppress with, yet, being rich and wealthy, made use of the opportunity which this gave them, to bear hard upon their poor neighbours. Those that have much, would have more, and, if they set to it, will have more, so many ways have they of encroaching upon their poor neighbours, and forcing from them the one ewe-lamb, 2 Sam. xii. 4. Do not the rich oppress the poor merely with the help of their riches, and draw them before the judgment-seats? Jam. ii. 6. Poor servants and tenants are hardly used by their rich lords and masters. The rams and the he-goats not only kept all the good pasture to themselves, ate the fat and drank the sweet, but they would not let the poor of the flock have any comfortable enjoyment of the little that was left them; they trod down the residue of the pastures, and fouled the best of the water, so that the flock was fain to eat that which they had trodden into the dirt, and drink that which they had muddied, v. 18, 19. This intimates that the great men, not only by extortion and oppression made and kept their neighbours poor, and scarcely left them enough to subsist on, but were so vexatious to them, that what little coarse fare they had, was imbittered to them. And this seemed a small thing to them; they thought there was no harm in it, as if it were the privilege of their quality to be injurious to all their neighbours. Nete, Many that live in pomp and at ease themselves, care not what straits those about them are reduced to, so they may but have every thing to their mind. Those that are at ease, and the proud, grudge that any body should live by them with any comfort.

But this was not all; they not only robbed the poor, to make them poorer, but were troublesome to the sick and weak of the flock; (v. 21.) they thrust with side and shoulder those that were feeble, (for the weakest goes to the wall,) and pushed the diseased with their horns, because they knew they could be too hard for them, when they durst not meddle with their match. It has been observed concerning sheep, that if one of the flock be sick and faint, the rest will secure it as they can,
and shelter it from the searching heat of the sun; but these, on the contrary, were most injurious to the diseased. That they could not serve themselves of, did they what they could to rid the country of, and so scatter them abroad, as if the poor, whom Christ says we must have always with us, were public nuisances, not to be relieved, but sent far away from us. Note. It is a barbarous thing to add affliction to the afflicted. Perhaps these rams and sheep are pointing to Jesus and the Pharisees, for they are such troublemakers of the church as Christ himself must come to deliver it from; (v. 23.) they devoured widows' houses, took away the key of knowledge, corrupted the pure water of divine truths, and oppressed the consciences of men with the traditions of the elders; besides, they were continually vexations and injuries to the flock of the flock that waited on the Lord, Zech. xi. 11. Note. It is no new thing for the flock of God to receive a great deal of damage and mischief from those that are themselves of the flock, and in eminent stations in it, Acts xx. 30.

11. Comfort spoken to those of the flock that are poor and feeble, and that wait for the consolation of Israel; (v. 22.) “I will save my flock, and they shall dwell safe, one with another, as the rams do, and the goats among themselves.” Upon this occasion, as is usual in the prophets, comes in a prediction of the coming of the Messiah, and the setting up of his kingdom, and the exceeding great and precious benefits which the church should enjoy under the protection and influence of that kingdom, Observe, What. (1.) He told them of the Messiah himself. (1.) He shall have his commission from God himself; I will set him up, v. 23. I will raise him up, v. 29. He sanctified and sealed him, appointed and anointed him. (2.) He shall be the great Shepherd of the sheep, who shall do that for his flock which no one else could do. He is the one Shepherd, under whom Jews and Gentiles should be one fold, v. 24. (3.) He is God’s Servant, employed by him and for him, and doing all in obedience to his will, with an eye to his glory; his Servant, to re-establish his kingdom among men, and advance the interests of that kingdom. (4.) He is David; one after God’s own heart, set as his King upon the holy hill of Zion, made the head of the corner; with whom the covenant of royalty is made, and to whom God speaks, for he is the same that was called and designated the Root and Offspring of David. (5.) He is the Plant of renown, because a righteious Branch, (Jer. xxi. 5.) a Branch of the Lord, that is beautiful and glorious, Isa. iv. 2. He has a name above every name, a throne above every throne, and may therefore well be called a Branch of renown. Some understand it of the church, the planting of the Lord’s seed, Isa. vi. 9. His name shall be remembered, (Ps. cxxv. 17.) and Christ’s in it.

2. Concerning the great charter by which the kingdom of the Messiah should be incorporated, and upon which it should be founded; (v. 25.) I will make with them a covenant of peace. The covenant of grace is a covenant of peace. In it God is at peace with us, speaks peace to us, and assures us of his favor, and the good we need to make us happy. The tenor of this covenant is; “I the Lord will be their God, a God all-sufficient to them, (v. 24.) will own them, and will be owned by them. In order to this, my Servant David shall be a Prince among them, to reduce them to their allegiance, to receive their homage, and to reign over them, in their name above them. Note. They, that have the Lord Jesus for their Prince, have the Lord Jehovah for their God. And then they, even the house of Israel, shall be my people. If we take God to be our God, he will take us to be his people.

From this covenant between God and Israel there results communion; “I the Lord their God am with them, to converse with them; and they shall know it, and have the comfort of it.”

3. Concerning the privileges of those that are the faithful subjects of this kingdom of the Messiah, and interested in the covenant of peace. These are set forth figuratively, as the blessings of the flock. But we have a key to it, v. 31. They that are the faithful, as the shepherds, are really men; men that have the Lord for their God, and are in covenant with him. Now to them is promised, (1.) That they shall enjoy a holy security, under the divine protection. Christ, our good Shepherd, has caused the evil beasts to cease out of the land, (v. 33.) having vanquished all our spiritual enemies, broken their power, and triumphed over them; the roaring lion is not a roaring devouring lion to them; they shall no more be a prey to the heathens, nor the heathen a terror to them; neither shall the beasts of the land devour them; sin and Satan, death and hell, are conquered. And then they shall dwell safely, not only in the folds, but in the fields, in the wilderness, in the woods, where the beasts of prey are; this shall be, that, as they shall not be left there; which denotes not only that the beasts being made to cease, there shall be no danger, but, their consciences being purified and pacified, they shall be in no apprehension of danger; not only safe from evil, but quiet from the fear of evil. Note. Those may lay them down and sleep securely, sleep it ease, that have Christ for their Prince; for he will be their Prince and make them to dwell in safety. None shall hurt them, may, none shall make them afraid. If God be for us, who can be against us? Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed. Through Christ, God delivers his people not only from the things they have reason to fear, but from their fear even of death itself, from all that fear that has torment. This safety from evil is promised; (v. 27.) They shall be safe in their land, in no danger of being invaded and enslaved, though their great plenty be a temptation to their neighbors to desire their lands; and that which shall make them think themselves safe is, their confidence in the wisdom, power, and goodness of God; They shall know that I am the Lord. All our disquieting fears arise from our ignorance of God, and mistakes concerning his power and will; but careful, i. e. careful concerning them encourages their confidence in him: “I have broken the bands of their yoke, with which they have been brought, and held down, under oppression, and have delivered them out of the bands of those that served themselves of them. Whence they shall argue, He that has delivered, does and will, therefore will we dwell safely.” This is explained, and applied to our gospel-state, (Luke xvi. 4.) That we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, as those may do, that serve him in faith. (2.) That they shall enjoy a spiritual plenty of all good things, the best things, for their comfort and happiness; They shall no more be consumed with hunger in the land, v. 29. Famine and scarcity, which are among Israel in a particular manner, have been made so much to their reproach among the heathen as to any other, because the fruitfulness of Canaan was so much talked of. But now they shall not bear that shame of the heathen any more. For the showers shall come down in their season, even showers of blessings, v. 26. Christ is a Shepherd that will feed his people, (v. 30.) they shall go in and out, and find them, and shall feed in the green pastures of his grace; for they shall not be put off with the world for a portion, which is not bread, which satisfies not, and which occasions those that are put off with it to
be consumed with hunger. The ordinances of the ceremonial law are called beggarly elements, for there was little in them, compared with the Christian institutions wherewith the mowet fills his hand, and he that binds sheaves, his bosom. They that hunger and thirst after righteousness shall be satisfied with that hunger, for they shall be filled. And he that drinks of the water that Christ gives him, the still waters by which he leads his sheep, shall never thirst. [2.] Showers of blessings shall come upon them, v. 26, 27. The heavens shall yield their dew, the trees of the field also shall yield their fruit. The seat of this plenty is God's hill, his holy hill of Zion, for on that mountain, the Lord, the Lord God, is, that God was made in all nations a feast; to that those must join themselves, who would partake of gospel-benefits. The cause of this plenty is, the showers that come down in their season, that descend upon the mountains of Zion; the graces of Christ, his doctrine that draws as the dew; the graces of Christ, and the gifts and comforts of his Spirit, by which we are made fruitful in the fruits of righteousness. The instances of this plenty and the blessings of heaven pour down upon us, and the productions of grace brought forth by us; our comfort in God's favour, and God's glory in our fruit-bearing. The extent of this plenty is very large, to all the places round about my hill for out of Zion shall go forth the law, shall go forth light to a dark world, and the river that shall water a dry and desert world; all that are in the neighbourhood of Zion, shall draw upon her dew, and the nearer the church, the nearer it is. And lastly, The effect of this plenty, is, I will make them a blessing, eminently and exemplarily blessed, patterns of happiness, Isa. xix. 24. Or, They shall be blessings to all about them, diffusively useful. Note, Those that are the blessed of the Lord must study to make themselves blessings to the world. He that is good, let him do good, and such as have received the grace, let them, like the minister of the sanctuary, bless with it. Now this promise of the Messiah and his kingdom spoke much comfort to those to whom it was then made, for they might be sure that God would not utterly destroy their nation, how low soever it might be brought, as long as that blessing was in the womb of it, Isa. lxxv. 8. But it speaks much more comfort to us, who claim it full, who are the children of the new covenant, and have found in his promises, and blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things by him.

CHAP. XXXV.

It was promised, in the foregoing chapter, that when the time to favour Zion, yea, the set time, should come, especially the time for sending the Messiah, and setting up his kingdom in the world, God would cause the enemies of the church to cease, and the blessings and comforts of the church to abound. This chapter enlarges upon the former promise, concerning the enemies of the church, and the blessings that shall come upon them. But in the next chapter upon the latter promise, the replenishing of the church with blessings. Mount Seir, that is, Edom, is the enemy propheted against in this chapter, but fully put here, as in the prophecy of Obadiah, for all the enemies of the church; for as they all walked in the way of Cain that hated Abel, so they all walked in the way of Esau, who hated Jacob, but over whom Jacob, by virtue of a particular blessing, was blessed. Note, New instances of God's kindness are charged upon the Edomites, and that was, their spite and malice to Israel, v. 5, 10. 13. II. The runn threatened, that should come upon them for this sin. God will bear against them (v. 4.) and none shall save them; they shall be laid waste, (v. 4.) depopulated, and made quite desolate, (v. 6-9.) and left so when other nations that had been wasted, should recover themselves, v. 14, 15.

1. MOREOVER, the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, set thy face against mount Seir, and prophes, against it, 3. And say unto it, Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, O mount Seir, I am against thee, and I will stretch out my hand against thee, and I will make thee most desolate. 4. I will lay thy cities waste, and thou shalt be desolate; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord. 5. Because thou hast had a perpetual hatred, and hast shed the blood of the children of Israel by the force of the sword in the time of their calamity, in the time that their iniquity had an end: 6. Therefore, as I live, saith the Lord God, I will prepare thee unto blood, and blood shall pursue thee: sith thou hast not hated blood, even blood shall pursue thee. 7. Thus will I make mount Seir most desolate, and cut off from it him that passeth out, and him that returneth. 8. And I will fill his mountains with his slain men: in thy hills, and in thy valleys, and in all thy rivers, shall they fall that are slain with the sword. 9. I will make thee perpetual desolations, and thy cities shall not return; and ye shall know that I am the Lord.

Mount Seir was mentioned as partner with Moab in one of the threatenings we had before; (ch. xxxiv. 8.) but here it is convicted and condemned by itself, and has woes of its own. The prophet must boldly set his face against Edom, and prophesy particularly against it; for the God of Israel has said, O mount Seir, I am against thee. Note, Those that have God against them, have the word of God against them, and the face of his ministers, nor dare they prophesy any good to them, but evil. The prophet must tell the Edomites that God has a controversy with them, and let them know,

1. What is the cause and ground of that controversy, v. 5. God espouses his people's cause, and will plead it; takes what is done against them as done against himself, and will reckon for it; and it is upon their account that God now contends with the Edomites. (1.) Because of the enmity they had against the people of God, through the plot of Jacob, that was rooted in the heart; "Then hast had a perpetual hatred to them, to the very name of an Israelite." The Edomites kept up an hereditary malice against Israel, the same that Esau bore to Jacob, because he got the birthright and the blessing. Esau had been reconciled to Jacob, had embraced and kissed him; (Gen. xxxvi.) and we do not find that ever he quarrelled with him again. Now it is upon his account, that Jacob and Esau shall never be reconciled to the seed of Jacob, but hate them with a perpetual hatred. Note, Children will be more apt to imitate the vices, than the virtues, of their parents; and to tread in the steps of their sin than in the steps of their repentance. Parents should therefore be careful not to set their children any bad example, for though, through the grace of God, they may repent, yet the posterity of what they have done amiss to themselves, they may not be able to obviate the bad influence of it upon their children. It is strange how deeply rooted national antipathies sometimes are, and how long they last; but it is not to be wondered at, that profane Edomites hate pious Israelites, since the old enmity that was put between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent (Gen. iii. 15.) will continue to the end. Marvel not if the world hate you. (2.) Because of the injuries they had done to the people
of God; they shed their blood by the force of the sword, in the time of their calamity; they did not attach them as fair and open enemies, and laid wait for them, to cut off those of them that had escaped; (Obad. 14.) or, they drove them back upon the sword of the pursuers, by which they fell. It was cowardly, as well as barbarous, to take advantage of their distress; and for neighbours, with whom they had lived peaceably, to smite them unawares, when strangers openly badgered them. It was in the time that the originally had an end, when the measure of it was full, and destruction came. Note, Even those that suffer justly, and for their sins, are yet to be pitied, and not trampled upon. If the father corrects one child, he expects the rest should tremble at it, not triumph in it.

2. What should be the effect and issue of that captivity? If God stretch out his hand against the country of Edom, he will make it most desolate, v. 3. Desolation and desolation. (1.) The inhabitants shall be slain with the sword; (v. 6.) I will prepare thee unto blood. Edom shall be gradually weakened, and so be the more easily conquered, and the enemy shall gather strength, the more effectually to subdue it. Thus preparation is in the making a great while before the judgment is to be executed. (2.) They shall not be filled with blood; it implies, "Thou hast delighted in it, and thirsted after it. Those that do not keep up a rooted hatred of sin, when a temptation to it is very strong, will be in danger of yielding to it. Some read it, "Unless thou hatest blood," that is, "unless thou dost repent, and put off this bloody disposition, blood shall pursue thee." And then it is an intimation that they may be prevented by a thorough reformation. If the turn not, he will whet his sword, Ps. xii. 12. But if he turn, he will lay it by. Blood shall pursue thee, the guilt of the blood which thou hast shed, or the judgment of blood; thy bloodthirsty enemies shall pursue thee, which way soever thou seest to make thy escape. A great and general slaughter shall be made of the Idumeans, such as had been foretold, (Isa. xxxix. 6.) the mountains and hills, the valleys and rivers, shall be filled with the slain, v. 8. The pursuers shall overtake those that flee, and shall give no quarter, but put them all to the sword. Note, When God comes to make inquisition for blood, those that have shed the blood of his Israel shall have blood given them to drink, for they are worthy. Satin te sangim sine siti—Give thirst with blood which thou hast thirsted. (2.) The country shall be laid waste. The cities shall be destroyed, (v. 4.) the country made desolate; (v. 7.) for God will cut off from both him that passeth out, and him that returneth; and when the inhabitants are cut off, that should keep the cities in repair, they will decay, and go into ruins; and when those are cut off that should till the land, that will soon over run with brutes and wilderness. Note, Those that help forward the desolations of Israel, may expect to be themselves made desolate. And that which completes the judgment is, that Edom shall be made perpetual desolations, (v. 9.) and the cities shall never return to their former state, nor the inhabitants of them come back from their captivity and dispersion. Note, Those that turn their backs on God and his people, as the carnal mind has, can expect no other than to be made a perpetual desolacion. Implacable malice will justly be punished with irrepiable ruin.

10 Because thou hast said, These two nations, and these two countries, shall be mine, and we will possess it; whereas the Lord was there: 11. Therefore, as I live, saith the Lord God, I will even do according to thine anger, and according to thine envy, which thou hast used out of thy hatred against them; and I will make myself known among them, when I have judged thee. 12. And thou shalt know that I am the Lord, and that I have heard all thy blasphemies which thou hast spoken against the mountains of Israel, saying, They are laid desolate, they are given us to consume. 13. Thus with your mouth ye have boasted against me, and have multiplied your words against me: I have heard them. 14. Thus saith the Lord God, When the whole earth rejoiced, I will make thee desolate. 15. As thou didst rejoice at the inheritance of the house of Israel, because it was desolate, so will I do unto thee: thou shalt be desolate, O mount Seir, and all Idumea, even all of it; and they shall know that I am the Lord.

Here is, 1. A further account of the sin of the sin of the Edomites, and their bad conduct toward the people of God. We find the church complaining of them for setting on the Babylonians, and irritating them against Jerusalem, saying, Raze it, raze it, down with it, down with it; (Ps. cxxxvii. 7.) inflaming a rage that needed no spur; here it is further charged upon them, that they triumphed in Jerusalem, and in the desolations of the country. Many blasphemies they spake against the mountains of Israel, saying, with pride and pleasure, They are laid desolate, v. 12. Note, The troubles of God's church, as they give proofs of the constancy and fidelity of its friends, so they discover and draw out the corruptions of its enemies, in whom there then appears more brutish malice than one would have thought of.

Now their triumphing in Jerusalem's ruin is here said to proceed, (1.) From a sinful passion against the people of Israel; from anger and envy, and hatred against them, (v. 11.) that perpetual hatred spoken of, v. 5. Though they were not a match for them, and therefore could not do them a mischief themselves, yet they were glad when the Chaldeans did it, and when Judah was a desolate. (2.) From a selfish appetite to the land of Israel. They pleased themselves with hopes that when the people of Israel were destroyed, they should be let into the possession of their country, which they had so often grudged and envied them. They thought they could make out something of a title to it, ob defe-ctum sanctiis—for want of other heirs. If Jacob's issue fail, they think they may take it in the en- tail, and that the remainder will be to his brother's issue; "These two nations of Judah and Israel shall be mine. Now is the time for me to put in for them;" however, they hope to come in as first occupants, being near neighbours; We will possess it, when it is deserted; Cedum occupantes—Let us get possession, and that will be title enough. Note, These have the spirit of the Edomites, do not despise others, because they hope to get by them, or are pleased with their failure, because they expect to come into their business. When we see the vanity of the world in the disappointments, losses, and crosses that others meet with in it, instead of showing ourselves, upon such an occasion, greatly of it, we should rather be made thereby to sit more loose to it, and both take our affections off it, and so relieve our expectations from it. But in this case of the Edomites' coveting the land of Israel, and gaping
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We have done with mount Seir, and left it desolate, and likely to continue so, and must now turn ourselves, with the prophet, to the mountains of Israel, which we find desolate too, but hope, before we have done with the chapter, to leave in better plight. Here are two distinct prophecies in this chapter; 1. Here is one that seems chiefly to relate to the temporal estate of the Jews, wherein their present desolate condition is described, and the triumphs of their neighbours in it; but it is promised that their grievances shall be all redressed, and that in due time they shall be settled again in their own land, in the midst of peace and plenty, v. 1-15. Here is another that seems chiefly to concern their spiritual estate; wherein they are reminded of their former sins, and God's judgments upon them, to humble them for their own sakes, and for the sake of his name, v. 16-20. But it is promised, 1. That God would glorify himself in showing mercy to them, v. 21-24. 2. That he would sanctify them by giving them his grace, and fitting them for his service; and this for his own name's sake, and in answer to the prayers, v. 25-28.

1. Also, thou son of man, prophesy unto the mountains of Israel, and say, Ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord: 2. Thus saith the Lord God; Because the enemy had said against you, Aha, even the ancient high places are ours in possession; 3. Therefore prophesy and say, Thus saith the Lord God; Because they have made you desolate, and swallowed you up on every side, that ye might be a possession unto the residue of the heathen, and ye are taken up in the lips of talkers, and are an infamy of the people; 4. Therefore, ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord God; Thus saith the Lord God, to the mountains, to the hills, to the rivers, and to the valleys, to the desolate wastes, and to the cities that are forsaken, which became a prey and derision to the residue of the heathen that are round about; 5. Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Surely in the fire of my jealousy have I spoken against the residue of the heathen.
and against all Idumea, which have appointed my land into their possession with the joy of all their heart, with despicable minds, to cast it out for a prey. 6. Prophecy therefore concerning the land of Israel, and say unto the mountains, and to the hills, to the rivers, and to the valleys, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I have spoken in my jealousy and in my fury, because ye have borne the shame of the heathen: 7. Therefore thus saith the Lord God; I have lifted up my hand, Surely the heathen that are about you, they shall bear their shame. 8. But ye, O mountains of Israel, ye shall shoot forth your branches, and yield your fruit to any people of Israel; for they are at hand to come. 9. For behold, I am for you, and I will turn unto you, and ye shall be tilled and sown: 10. And I will multiply men upon you, all the house of Israel, even all of it: and the cities shall be inhabited, and the wastes shall be builded: 11. And I will multiply upon you man and beast; and they shall increase and bring fruit: and I will settle you after your old estates, and will do better unto you than at your beginnings: and ye shall know that I am the Lord. 12. Yea, I will cause men to walk upon you, even my people Israel; and they shall possess thee, and thou shalt be their inheritance, and thou shalt no more henceforth bereave them of men. 13. Thus saith the Lord God; Because they say unto you, Thou land devourest up men, and hast bereaved thy nations; 14. Therefore thou shalt devour men no more, neither bereave thy nations any more, saith the Lord God. 15. Neither will I cause men to hear in thee the shame of the heathen any more, neither shalt thou hear the reproach of the people any more, neither shalt thou cause thy nations to fall any more, saith the Lord God.

The prophet had been ordered to set his face toward the mountains of Israel, and prophesy against them, ch. vi. 2. Then God was coming forth to contend with his people; but now that God is returning in mercy to them, he must speak good words and comfortable words to these mountains, v. 1. And again, (v. 4.) Ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord; and what he says to them, he says to the hills, to the rivers, to the valleys, to the desolate wastes, in the country, and to the cities that are forsaken, (v. 4.) and again, v. 7. The people were gone, some one way, and some another; nothing remained there to be spoken to but the places, the mountains, and valleys; these the Chaldeans could not carry away with them; The earth abides for ever. Now, to show the mercy God had in reserve for the people, he is to speak of him as having a dormant kindness for the place; which if the Lord had been pleased for ever to abandon, he would have called upon it to hear the word of the Lord, nor would, as at this time, have showed its such things as these. Here is, 1. The compassionate notice God takes of the present deplorable condition of the land of Israel. It is become both a prey and a derision to the heathen, that round about, v. 1. It is become a prey to them, even they are all enriched with the plunder of it. When the Chaldeans had conquered them, all their neighbours flew to the spoil as to a shipwreck, every one thinking all his own that he could lay his hands on; (v. 3.) They have made you desolate, and swallowed you up on every side, that ye might be a possession to the heathen; to the rest of them, even such as had escaped the like desolation. No one thought it any crime to strip an Israelite; Turba Romae sequitur fortunam at semper—The mob of Rome still raise the elevated, and despise the fallen. It is the common cry, when a man is down, Down with him. 2. It is become a derision to them. They took all they had, and laughed at them when they had done. The enemy said, "Ah, even the ancient high places are ours in possession, v. 2. Neither the antiquity, nor the dignity, nor the sanctity, nor the fortifications, of the land of Israel are its security, but we are become masters of it all." The more honours that land had been adorned with, and the greater figure it had made among the nations, the more pride and pleasure did they take in making a spoil of it; wherefore by its desolation the more of the greater glory; for the more glorious the prosperity was, the more horrid is the adversity. God takes notice of it here as an aggravation of the present calamity of Israel; Ye are taken up in the lips of talkers, and are an infamy of the people, v. 3. All the talk of the country about was concerning the overthrow of the Jewish nation; and every one that spoke of it had some prevish, ill-natured reflection or other upon them. They were the scorn of them that were at ease, and the contempt of the proud, Ps. cxviii. 4. There are some that are noted for talkers, that have something to say of every body, but cannot find in their hearts to speak well of any body; God's people, among such people, were sure to be a reproach when the crown was fallen from their head. Thus it was the lot of Christianity, in its suffering days, to be every where spoken against. 11. The expressions of God's just displeasure against those who triumphed in the desolations of the land of Israel, as many of its neighbours did, even the residue of the brethren, and Idumea particularly. Let us see, 1. How they dealt with the Israel of God; they carved out large possessions to themselves out of their land; out of God's land; for so indeed it was; "They have appointed my land into their possession, (v. 3.) and so not only invaded their neighbour's property, but intrenched upon God's prerogative." It was the holy land which they had their sacrilegious hands on. Then God was coming forth to contend with his people, but now that God is returning in mercy to them, he must speak good words and comfortable words to these mountains, v. 1. And again, (v. 4.) Ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord; and what he says to them, he says to the hills, to the rivers, to the valleys, to the desolate wastes, in the country, and to the cities that are forsaken, (v. 4.) and again, v. 7. The people were gone, some one way, and some another; nothing remained there to be spoken to but the places, the mountains, and valleys; these the Chaldeans could not carry away with them; The earth abides for ever. Now, to show the mercy God had in reserve for the people, he is to speak of him as having a dormant kindness for the place; which if the Lord had been pleased for ever to abandon, he would have called upon it to hear the word of the Lord, nor would, as at this time, have showed its such things as these. Here is, 2. How God would deal with them who were
thus in word and deed abusive to his people. He has spoken against the heathen; he has passed sentence upon them, he has determined to reckon with them for it, and this in the fire of his just day, both for his own honour, and for the honour of his people, v. 5. Having a love for both, strong as death, he has a jealousy for both, cruel as the grave. They speak in their malice against God's people, and he will speak in his jealousy against them; and it is easy to say which will speak most powerfully. God will speak in his jealousy and in his fury, v. 6. Fury is in himself; but he will start his day against them, and handle them as severely as men do when they are in a fury. He will so speak to them in his wrath as to vex them in his sore displeasure. What he says, he will stand to, for it is backed with an oath. He has lifted up his hand, and sworn by himself, has sworn, and will not repent. And what is it that is said with so much heat, and yet with so much deliberation? It is this, (v. 7.) Surely the heathen that are about you, they shall bear their shame. Note, The righteous God, to whom vengeance belongs, will render shame for shame. Those that put contempt and reproach upon God's people, will, sooner or later, have it turned upon themselves; perhaps in this world, either their follies or their calamities, their miscarriages or their mischances, shall be their reproach; at last, in that day, when God shall gather in his people, that are gone out of captivity, they are to stand up and sing, and then shall the remnant return and be comforted, and every one of them object what an emphasis is laid upon that, (v. 10.) all whose spirits God stirred up to return; and those only were reckoned of the house of Israel, the rest had cut themselves off from it; or, though few, in comparison, returned at first, yet afterward, at divers times, they all returned; and then (says God) I will multiply these men, (v. 10.) multiply man and beast; and there should never be any more occasion for reproach. God's kingdom in the world is a growing kingdom; and his church, though for a time it may be diminished, shall recover itself, and be; see reignished.

3. That the people of Israel should have not only a comfortable sustentation, but a comfortable settlement in their own land: The cities shall be inhabited, the wastes shall be builded, v. 10. And I will settle men in their own habitations, v. 11. Their own God hath resettled them, but now God's favour shall retile them. When the prodigal son is become a penitent, he is settled again in his father's house, according to his former estate; Bring hither the first robe, and put it on him. Nay, I will do better unto you now than at your beginnings. There is more joy for the sheep that is brought back than there should have been if it had never gone astray. And God sometimes multiplies his people's comforts in proportion to the time that he has afflicted them. Thus God blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning, and doubled to him all he had.

4. That the people, after their return, should be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the land, so that it should not only be inhabited again, but as thickly inhabited, and as well peopled, as ever. God will bring back all the children of Israel, (v. 11.) of every one of them; observe what an emphasis is laid upon that, (v. 10.) all whose spirits God stirred up to return; and those only were reckoned of the house of Israel, the rest had cut themselves off from it; or, though few, in comparison, returned at first, yet afterward, at divers times, they all returned; and then (says God) I will multiply these men, (v. 10.) multiply man and beast; and there should never be any more occasion for reproach. God's kingdom in the world is a growing kingdom; and his church, though for a time it may be diminished, shall recover itself, and be; see reignished.

5. That the reappraisal long since cast upon the land of Israel by the evil spies, and of late revived, that it was a land that are up the inhabitants of it by famine, sickness, and the sword, should be quite pulled away, and there should never be any more occasion for reproach. Egypt was got into a bad name. It had of old spewed out the inhabitants, (Lev. xviii. 23.) the natives, the Aborigines, which was turned to its reappraisal by these that should have put another construction upon it, Numb. xiii. 32. It had of late devoured the Israelites, and spewed them out too; so that it was commonly said of it, It is a land, which, instead of supporting its natives or tribes that inhabit it, bereaves them, overthrows them, and causes them to fall; it is a torment which breaks all the tenants that come upon it. This character it had got among the neighbours; but God now promises that it shall be so no more; Thou shalt no more bereave them of men, (v. 12.) shalt devour men no more, v. 14. But the inhabitants shall live to a good old age, and not have the number of their months cut off in the midst. God will give them a length of days, v. 13.

4. Note, God will take away the reappraisal of his people by taking away that which was the occasion of it. When the nation is made to flourish in peace, plenty, and power, then they hear no more the shame of the heathen, (v. 13.) especially when it is reformed, when sin, which is the reappraisal of any people, particularly of God's professing people, is taken away, then shall they have no more occasion for reproaching other people. Note. When God returns in mercy to a people that return to him in duty, all their grievances will soon be redressed, and their honour retrieved.

16. Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, 17. Son of man, when the house of Israel dwelt in their own land,
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And God's now make Let were When that voice 22. good according I am holy I had forth then, ye house shall be his shows from I)y magnify the glory of his name, and he shall come and set his name in the midst of the heathen, that all the nations may know his name, for I will magnify it in it. This I will do among the heathen, and among the heathen shall the nations know my name, saith the Lord, when I am glorified in you before their eyes.

For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land.

When God promised the poor captives a glorious return, in due time, to their own land, it was a great discouragement to their hopes, that they were unworthy, utterly worthless, of such a favour; therefore, to remove that discouragement, God here shows them that he would do it for them purely for his own name's sake, that he might be glorified in it, and by it. (2.) I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, whither they went, 23. And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went. 24. And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went. 25. And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went.

And the restoration of that people being typical of our redemption by Christ, this is intended further to show that the ultimate end aimed at in our salvation, to which all the steps of it were made subservient, was the glory of God; to this end Christ directly did, in that short prayer, Father, glorify the name; and God declared it was his end in all he did, in the immediate answer given to that prayer, by a voice from heaven; I have glorified it, and I will glorify it yet again, John xii. 28. Now observe here,

1. How God's name had suffered both by the sins and by the miseries of Israel; and this was more to be regretted than all their sorrow, which they had brought upon themselves; for the honour of God lies nearer the hearts of good men than any interests of their own.

1. God's glory had been injured by the sin of Israel when they were in their own land, v. 17. It was a good land, a holy land, a land that had the eye of God upon it. But they defiled it by their own way, their wicked way; that is our own way, the way of our own choice; and we ourselves must bear the blame and shame of it. The sin of a people defiles their land; renders it abominable to God, and uncomfortable to themselves; so that they cannot have any holy communion with him or with one another. What was unclear might not be made use of; by the abuse of the gifts of God's bounty to us, we forfeit the use of them; and, the mind and conscience being defiled with guilt, no comfort is allowed us, nothing is pure to us. Their way in the eye of God was like the pollution of a woman during the days of her separation, which shut her out from the sanctuary, and made every thing she touched ceremonially uncleann, Lev. xxv. 19. Sin is that abominable thing by which the Lord will destroy the land; he cannot endure to look upon. They shed blood, and worshipped idols, (v. 18.) and with these sins defiled the land. For this, God poured out his fury upon them, scattered them among the heathen; their own land was sick of them, and they were sent into other lands. Herein God was righteous, and was justified in what he did; none could say that he did them any wrong, now, he did justice to his own honour, for he judged them according to their way and according to their doings, v. 19. And yet, the matter being not rightly understood, he was not glorified in it; for the enemies did say, as Moses pleaded the Egyptians would say, if he had destroyed them in the wilderness, that for mischief he brought them forth. Their neighbours considered them rather as a people to be despised, and as sinners and enemies, who took occasion from the calamities they were in, instead of glorifying God, as they might justly have done, to reproach him, and put contempt upon him; and God's name was continually every day blasphemed by their oppressors, Isa. li. 3.

2. When they entered into the land of the heathen, God had no glory by them; but, on the contrary, his honour was profaned, v. 20. (1.) It was profaned by the sins of Israel; they were no credit to their profession wherever they went, but, on the contrary, a reproach to it. The name of God and his holy religion was blasphemed through them, Rom. ii. 24. When those that pretended to be in relation to God, in covenant and communion with him, were found corrupt in their morals, slaves to their appetites and passions, dishonest in their dealings, and false to their words, and the trusts reposed in them, the enemies of the Lord had thereby great occasion given them to blaspheme, especially when they quarrelled with their God for correcting them, than which nothing could be more scandalous. (2.) It was profaned by the sufferings of God's people; for his people, who, on that account, could have no occasion to reproach God, as unable to protect his own worshippers, and to make good his own grants. They said, in scorn, "These are the people of the land, these wicked people; you see he could not keep them in their obedience to his precepts; these miserable people, you see he could not keep them in the enjoyment of his favours. These are the people that came out of Egypt's land, they are the very scum of the nations. Are these they that had statutes so righteous, whose lives are so upright? Is this the nation that so much celebrated for a wise and understanding people, and that is said to have God so nigh unto them? Do these belong to that brave, that holy nation, who appear here so vile, so abject?" Thus God said of his people, and did not increase his wealth by their prosperity, but by their reproach they were under reflected upon him.

11. Let us see how God would retrieve his honour, secure it, and advance it, by working a great reformation upon them, and then working a great salvation for them. He would have scattered them among the heathen, were it not that he feared the reproach of the enemy. Degraded by them, they were unworthy of his compensation, yet he had pity for his own holy name, and a thousand pities it was that that should be trampled upon and abused. He looked with compassion on his own honour, which was bleeding among the heathen, on that
jewel which was trodden into the dirt, which the house of Israel, even in the land of their captivity, had profaned, v. 21. In pity to that, God brought them out from the heathen, because their sins were so scandalous there than they had been in their own land. "Therefore I will gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land, v. 24. Not for your sake, because you are worthy of such a favour; for you are most unworthy; but for my holy name's sake, that I may sanctify my great name," v. 23. Observe, by the way, God's holy name is his great name; his holiness is his greatness; so he reckons it himself; nor does any thing make a man truly great but being truly good, and partaking of God's holiness. God will magnify his name as a holy name, for he will sanctify it; will sanctify my name which you have profaned.

25. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. 26. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. 27. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. 28. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God. 29. I will also save you from all your uncleannesses: and I will call for the corn, and will increase it, and lay no famine upon you. 30. And I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field, that ye shall receive no more reproach of famine among the heathen. 31. Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities, and for your abominations. 32. Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord God, be it known unto you; he ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel. 33. Thus saith the Lord God; In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities, I will also cause you to dwell in the cities, and the wastes shall be builded. 34. And the desolate land shall be tilled, whereas it lay desolate in the sight of all that passed by. 35. And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste, and desolate, and ruined cities, are become fenced, and are inhabited. 36. Then the heathen, that are left round about you, shall know that I the Lord build the ruined places, and plant that that was desolate: I the Lord have spoken it, and I will do it 37. Thus saith the Lord God, I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them; I will increase them with men like a flock. 38. As the holy flock, as the flock of Jerusalem in her solemn feasts, so shall the waste cities be filled with flocks of men; and they shall know that I am the Lord.

The people of God might be discouraged in their hopes of a restoration, by the sense not only of their unworthiness of such a favour, (which was answered, in the foregoing verses, with this, that God, in doing it, would have an eye to his own glory, not to their worthiness,) but of their unfitness for such a dignity as kings, being still corrupt and sand; and that is answered, in these verses, with a promise that God would by his grace prepare and qualify them for the mercy, and then bestow it on them. And this was in part fulfilled in that wonderful effect which the captivity in Babylon had upon the Jews there, that it effectually cured them of their inclination to idolatry. But it is further intended as a draught from the covenant of grace, and a specimen of those spiritual blessings with which we are blessed in heavenly things by that covenant. As, (ch. xxxiv.) after a promise of their return, the prophecy insensibly slid into a promise of the coming of Christ, the great Shepherd, so here it insensibly slides into a promise of the Spirit, and his gracious influences and operations; which we have as much need of for our sanctification as we have of Christ's merit for justification.

1. God here promises that he will work a good work in them, to qualify them for the good work he intended to bring about for them, v. 25.—27. We had promises to the same purport, ch. xi. 18.—20. (1.) That God would cleanse them from the pollutions of sin; (v. 25.) I will sprinkle clean water upon you; which signifies both the blood of Christ sprinkled upon the conscience to purify that as it were to take away the sense of guilt, (as those that were sprinkled with the water of purification were thereby discharged from their ceremonial uncleanness,) and the grace of the Spirit sprinkled on the whole soul to purify it from all corrupt inclinations and dispositions, as Numans was cleansed from his leprosy by dipping in Jordan. Christ was himself the atonement, else it could not have been cleansing to us; and it is a holy Spirit that makes us holy; From all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. And, (v. 29.) I will save you from all your uncleannesses. Sin is defiling, idolatry particularly is so; it renders sinners odious to God, and burdensome to themselves; when guilt is pardoned, and the corrupt nature sanctified, then we are cleansed from our filthiness, and there is no other way of being saved from it. This God promises his people here, in order to his being sanctified in them, v. 23. We cannot sanctify God's name, unless he sanctify our hearts; nor live to his glory, but by his grace. (2.) That God would give them a new heart; a disposition of mind excellent in itself, and vastly different from what it was before. God will work an inward change, in order to a uni-
versal change. Note, All that have an interest in the new covenant, and a title to the new Jerusalem, have a new heart and a new spirit, and these are necessary in order to their walking in newness of life. This is that divine nature which believers are by the promises made partakers of. (3.) That, instead of a heart of stone, insensible and inflexible, it is apt to receive any divine impressions, and to return any devout affections, God would give a heart of flesh, a soft and tender heart, that has spiritual senses exercised, conscious to itself of spiritual pains and pleasures, and compliance in every thing with the will of God. Note, Renewing grace works as a great a change in the soul as the turning of a dead stone into a precious gem. (4.) That, as we have been persuaded to our duty, God will cause them to walk in his statutes, will not only show them the way of his statutes before them, but incline them to walk in it, and thoroughly furnish them with wisdom, and will, and active powers, for every good work. In order to this, he will put his Spirit within them; as a Teacher, Guide, and Sanctifier. Note, God does not force men to walk in his statutes by external violence, but causes them to walk in his statutes by an internal principle. And observe what use we ought to make of this gracious power and principle promised us, and put within us; Ye shall keep my judgments. If God will do his part according to the promise, we must do ours according to the precepts (v. 3.) It must be our business, as the means for our duty, should engage and quicken our constant care and endeavour to do our duty. God's promises must drive us to his precepts as our rule, and then his precepts must send us back to his promises for strength, for without his grace we can do nothing.

He had here promised that he will take them into covenant with himself. The sum of the covenant of grace we have, v. 28. Ye shall be my people, and I will be your God. It is not, "If you will be my people, I will be your God," (though it is very true that we cannot expect to have God to be to us a God, unless we be to him a people;) but he has chosen us, and loved us first, not we him; therefore the condition is of grace, is by promise, as well as of his free good will; no part of the covenant. Note, We shall be his, he will be ours; and so it is here promised that he will take them into covenant with himself. The sum of the covenant of grace we have, v. 28. Ye shall be my people, and I will be your God. It is not, "If you will be my people, I will be your God," (though it is very true that we cannot expect to have God to be to us a God, unless we be to him a people;) but he has chosen us, and loved us first, not we him; therefore the condition is of grace, is by promise, as well as of his free good will; no part of the covenant. Note, We shall be his, he will be ours; and so it is here promised that he will take them into covenant with himself. The sum of the covenant of grace we have, v. 28. Ye shall be my people, and I will be your God. It is not, "If you will be my people, I will be your God," (though it is very true that we cannot expect to have God to be to us a God, unless we be to him a people;) but he has chosen us, and loved us first, not we him; therefore the condition is of grace, is by promise, as well as of his free good will; no part of the covenant.

3. He promises that he will bring about all that good for them, which the exigence of their case calls for. When they are thus prepared for mercy, (1.) Then they shall return to their possessions, and be settled again in them; (v. 28.) Ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers. God will, in bringing them back to it, have an eye not to any merit of theirs, but to the promise made to the fathers; for therefore he gave it them at first, Deut. vii. 7. 8. Therefore he is gracious, because he has sent out his heart to comfort them. (2.) Then they shall enjoy a plenty of all good things; when they are saved from their uncleanness, from their sins which kept good things from them, then I will call for the corn, and will increase it, v. 29. Plenty comes at God's call, and the plenty he calls for shall be still growing; and when he speaks the word, the fruit both of the tree and of the field, shall multiply. As the inhabitants multiply, the production shall multiply for their maintenance; for he that sends mouths will send meat. Famine was one of the judgments which they had laboured under, and it had been as much as any other a refreshment to them, that they should be satisfied in a land famed for fruitfulness. But now I will lay no famine upon you; and none are under that rod, without having it laid on by him. Then they shall receive no more refreshment of famine, shall never be again upbraided with that; nor shall it ever be said that God is a Master that keeps his servants to short allowance. Nay, they shall not only be cleared from this calamity, but shall have a share in all others of the ditt of abundance. The land that had long lain desolate in the sight of all that passed by, that looked upon it, some with contempt and some with compassion, shall again be tiled, (v. 34.) and, having long lain fallow, it will now be the more fruitful. Observe, God will call for the corn, and yet they must till the ground for it. Note, Even promised mercies must be laboured for; for the promise is not to supersede, but to quicken and encourage, our industry and endeavour. And such a blessing will God command on the hands of the diligent, that all who pass by shall take notice of it with wonder, v. 35. They shall say, "See what a blessed change here is, how this land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden; the desert turned again into a paradise, (Gen. x. 11.) and for his people to be crowned with, sufficient to balance the contempt they are now loaded with; and in them he will be honoured. This wonderful increase both of the people of the land and of its products is compared (v. 36.) to the large flocks of cattle that are brought to Jerusalem, to be sacrificed at one of the solemn feasts. Even the cities that now have none shall be filled with beasts, not like the flocks with which the pastures are covered over, (Ps. lxxv. 13.) but like the holy flock which is brought to the courts of the Lord's house. Note, Then the increase of the numbers of a people is honourable and comfortable indeed, when they are all dedicated to God as a holy flock, to be presented to him for living sacrifices. Crowds are a lively sight in the fields, and a pleasing view in the streets, and therefore shall be my people, I will make you so, I will give you the nature and spirit of my people, and then I will be your God." And this is the foundation and top-stone of a believer's happiness; it is heaven itself, Rev. xxi. 3, 7.

4. He shows what shall be the happy effects of this blessed change. (1.) It shall have a happy effect upon the people of God themselves, for it shall bring them to an ingenuous repentance for their sins; (v. 31.) Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and shall loathe yourselves. See here what sin is; it is an abomination, a loathsome thing that abominable which the Lord hates. See what is the first step toward repentance; it is remembering our own evil ways, reflecting seriously upon the sins we have committed, and being particular in recapitulating them. We must remember against ourselves not only our gross enormities, our own evil ways, but our defects and infirmities, our doings that were not good, not so good as they should be, and yet they were but the working of the law, but our coming short of it. See what is evermore a companion of true repentance, and that is, self-loathing, a holy shame and confusion of face; "You shall loathe yourselves in your own sight," seeing how loathsome you have made yourselves in the sight of God." Self-love is at the bottom of sin, which we cannot but blush to see the absurdity of; then our passion worketh in contradiction of being, upon good grounds, reconciled to ourselves. And lastly, see what is the most powerful inducement to an evangelical repentance, and that is, a sense of the mercy of God; when God sets them in the midst of plenty, then they shall loathe themselves for their iniquities. Note, The Goodness of
God should overcome our badness, and lead us to repentance. The more we see of God's readiness to receive us into favour upon our repentance, the more reason we shall see to be ashamed of ourselves that we could ever sin against so much love. That heart is hard indeed, that will not be thus melted.

(2) It shall have a happy effect upon their neighbours, for it will be the clear knowledge of God; (v. 36.) "Then the heathen that are left round about you, that spake ignorantly of God, (for so all those that speak ill of him,) when they saw the hand of Israel desolate, shall begin to know better, and to speak more intelligently of God, being convinced that he is able to rebuild the most desolate cities, and to re-fl vant the most desolate countries; and that then the high favours to his people may be obtained for a time, they shall not be cut off for ever. They shall be made to know the truth of divine revelation, by the exact agreement which they shall discern between God's word which he has spoken to Israel, and his works which he has done for them; The Lord have spoken it, and I will do it. With us, saying and doing are two things, but they are not so with God. His prophecies these things to them, not as the recompense of their merits, but as the return of their prayers."

(1.) Let them not think that they have deserved it; Not for your sakes do I this, be it known to you; (v. 22, 32.) no, be you ashamed and confounded for your own ways: God is doing this, all this which he has promised; it is as sure to be done as if it were done qualities or good deeds, not because God had any need of them, or expected any benefit by them. No, in showing mercy, he acts by prerogative, not for our deserts, but for his own honour. See how emphatically this is expressed: Be it known to you, it is not for your sakes; which intimates that we are apt to entertain a high conceit of our own merits, and are with difficulty persuaded to disclaim a confidence in mercy, one who can find no other for themselves, will make all his favours to know and own that it is his grace, and not their goodness, his mercy, and not their merit, that made them so; and therefore not unto them, not unto them, but unto him, is all the glory due. [2.] They must repent of the sin of their own evil ways. They must own that the mercies they receive from God, are not only merited, but that they are a thousand times forgotten; and therefore they must be so far from boasting of their good works, that they must be ashamed and confounded for their evil ways, and then they are best prepared for mercy.

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CHAP. XXXVII.

The threatening of the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem for their sins, which we had in the former part of the book, is now to be comforted with its restoration and deliverance for the glory of God, which we have here in the latter part of the book, are as comfortable, and as those were illustrated with many visions and similitudes, for the assurance of the Jews, as these, for the encouraging of a humble faith. God had assured them, in the foregoing chapter, that he would gather the house of Israel, even all of it, and would bring them out of their captivity, and return them to the land; but there were two things that rendered this very unlikely. 1. That they were so dispersed among their enemies, so destitute of all helps and advantages which might operate favour of further their return, and so dispirited likewise in their own minds; upon all these accounts they are here, in vision, compared to a valley full of the dry bones of dead men; which should be brought together and made alive in the Lord's life. The vision is (v. 1. ... 10.) and the explanation of it, with its application to the present case, v. 11 . . . 14. It is not for thy righteousness. It is not for the sake of any of their good qualities or good deeds, not because God had any need of them, or expected any benefit by them. No, in showing mercy, he acts by prerogative, not for our deserts, but for his own honour. See how emphatically this is expressed: Be it known to you, it is not for your sakes; which intimates that we are apt to entertain a high conceit of our own merits, and are with difficulty persuaded to disclaim a confidence in mercy, one who can find no other for themselves, will make all his favours to know and own that it is his grace, and not their goodness, his mercy, and not their merit, that made them so; and therefore not unto them, not unto them, but unto him, is all the glory due. [2.] They must repent of the sin of their own evil ways. They must own that the mercies they receive from God, are not only merited, but that they are a thousand times forgotten; and therefore they must be so far from boasting of their good works, that they must be ashamed and confounded for their evil ways, and then they are best prepared for mercy.

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noise, and, behold, a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone. 8. And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above: but there was no breath in them. 9. Then said he unto me, Prophesy unto the wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord God, Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. 10. So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army. 11. Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost; we are cut off for our parts. 12. Therefore prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. 13. And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves. 14. And shall put my Spirit in you, and ye shall live; and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the Lord have spoken it, and performed it, saith the Lord. Here is, 1. The vision of a resurrection from death to life, and it is a glorious resurrection. This is a thing so utterly unknown to nature, and so contrary to its principles. (A privativa ad habitum non datur resurrectione—From privation to possession there is no return,) that we could have no thought of it but by the word of the Lord; and that it is certain by that word, that there shall be a general resurrection of the dead, some have urged from this vision: "For" (say they) "otherwise it would not properly be made a sign for the confirming of their faith in the promises and precepts of God, and for the coming of the Messiah is mentioned for the confirming of their faith teaching a former deliverance," Is. vii. 14. But whether it be a confirmation or no, it is, without doubt, a most lively representation of a threefold resurrection, besides that which it is primarily intended to be the sign of. 1. The resurrection of souls from the death of sin, the life of grace, comes to a full, local, visible, and divine life, by the power of divine grace going along with the word of Christ, John v. 24, 25. 2. The resurrection of the gospel-church, or any part of it, from an afflicted, persecuted state, especially under the yoke of the New Testament Babylon, to liberty and peace. 3. The resurrection of the body at the great event of the kingdom of God, the bodies of believers that shall rise to life eternal. Let us observe the particulars of this vision. (1.) The deplorable condition of these dead bones; the prophet was made, [1.] To take an exact view of them. By a prophetic impulse and a divine power he was, in vision, carried out and set in the midst of a valley, probably that plain spoken of, ch. iii. 22, where God then talked with him; and it was full of bones, of dead men's bones; not piled up on a heap, as in a charnel-house, but scattered upon the face of the ground, as if some bloody battle had been fought there, and the slain left unburied till all the flesh was devoured or putrefied, and nothing left but the bones, which were laid by one another and dispersed. He passed by them round about, and he observed not only that they were very many, (for there are multitudes gone to the congregation of the dead,) but that, lo, they were very dry, having been long exposed to the sun and wind. The bones that had been moistened with marrow, (Job xxi. 24.) when they have been any while dead, are full of moisture, and the least dust; the body is now fenced with bones, (Job x. 11.) but then they will themselves be defenceless. The Jews in Babylon were like these dead and dry bones, unlikely ever to come together, to be so much as a skeleton, less likely to be formed into a body, and least of all to be a living body. However, they lay unburied in the open valley, which encouraged the hopes of their resurrection, as of the two witnesses, Rev. xi. 8, 9. The bones of Gog and Magog shall be buried, (ch. xxxiii. 12, 15.) for their destruction is final; but the bones of Israel are in the open valley, under the eye of Heaven, for there is hope in their end. [2.] He was made to own their case deplorable, and not to be helped by any power less than that of God himself; (v. 5.) and thereby his own power of these great things more likely? Canst thou devise how it should be done? Can thy philosophy reach to put life into dry bones, or thy politics to restore a captive nation? "No," says the prophet, "I know not how it should be done, but <bold>knoweseth</bold>." He does not say, "They cannot live," lest he should seem to limit the Holy One of Israel; but, "Lord, thou knowest whether they can, and whether they shall; if then dost not put life into them, it is certain that they cannot live." Note, God is perfectly acquainted with his own power and his own purposes, and will have us to refer all to them, and to see and own that his wondrous works are such as could not be effected by any counsel or power but his own. (2.) The means used for the bringing of these dispersed bones together, and these dead and dry bones to life. It must be done by prophecy. Ezekiel is ordered to prophesy upon these bones; (v. 4. and again, v. 9.) Prophesy to the wind. So he prophesied as he was commanded, v. 7, 10. [1.] He must preach, and he did so; and the dead bones lived by a power that went along with the word of God which he preached. [2.] He must pray, and he often did; and the dead bones were made by prayer to answer to prayer; for a spirit of life entered into them. See the efficacy of the word and prayer, and the necessity of both, for the raising of dead souls. God bids his ministers prophesy upon the dry bones; Say unto them, Lives; yea, say unto them, Lives; and they do as they are commanded, calling to them again and again, O Lively bones. But we call in vain, still they are dead, still they are very dry; we must therefore be earnest with God in prayer for the working of the Spirit with the word; Come, O breath, and breathe upon them. God's grace can save souls without our preaching, but our preaching cannot save them without God's grace, and that grace must be prized, sought, and obtained. It is not enough to fervently and diligently use the means of grace, even with those that there seems little probability of gaining upon. To prophesy upon dry bones seems as great a penance as to water a dry stick; and yet, whether they will hear or forbear, we must discharge our trust, must prophesy as we are commanded; in the name of him who raises the dead, and is the Fountain of life. (3.) The wonderful effect of these means. Those that do as they are commanded, as they are commis-
sioned, in the face of the most discouragements, 
need not doubt of success, for God will own and en-
rage as well as the living.

[1.] Ezekiel looked down, and prophesied upon the 
bones in the valley, and they became human bod-
dies. First, That which he had to say to them was, 
that God would infully raise them to life: Thus 
saih the Lord God unto these bones, Ye shall live, 
v. 5. and again, Ye shall live, v. 6. And he that 
speaks the word, shall thereby do the work; he that 
said this had living bones, and all that were by; He 
will clothe them with skin and flesh, (v. 6.) as he 
did at first, Job x. 11. He that made us so fear-
fully and wonderfully, and curiously wrought us, 
can in like manner new-make us, for his arm is not 
shortened. Secondly, That which was immediately 
done for them was, that they were moulded anew 
into shape. We may well suppose it was with great 
liveliness and vigour that the prophet prophesied, 
especially when he found what he said began to take 
effect. Note, The opening, sealing, and applying 
of the promises, are the ordinary means of our par-
ticipation of a new and divine nature. As Ezekiel 
prophesied in this vision, there was a noise, a word 
of command, from heaven, seconding what he said; 
or, it signified the motion of the angels that were 
to be employed in the first bringing them into 
readiness in the deliverance of the Jews, and we read 
of the noise of their wings, (Ezek. i. 24.) and the 
sound of their going, 2 Sam. v. 24. And behold, a 
shaking, or commotion, among the bones; even 
dead and dry bones begin to move, when they are 
called to hear the word of the Lord. This was ful-
cilled when, upon Cyrus's proclamation of liberty, 
those whose spirits God had stirred up, began to 
think of making use of that liberty, and getting 
ready to be gone; when there was a noise, behold, 
a shaking; when David heard the sound of the go-
ing on the tops of the mulberry-trees, then he be-
strider himself; then there was a shaking. When 
Paul heard the voice saying, Why persecutest thou 
me? Behold, a shaking of the dry bones; he trem-
bled and was astonished. But this was not all, The 
bones came together bone to his bone, under a divine 
direction; and though there are in man a multitude 
of bones, yet of all the bones of all these numerous 
slain not one was missing, not one missed its way, 
not one missed its place, but, as it were by instinct, 
each knew and found its fellow; the dispersed bones 
came together, and the displaced bones were knit 
together; the divine power supplying that to these 
dead bones which God had fitted for active and 
active purpose. 
Thus shall it be in the resurrection of the 
dead; the scattered atoms shall be arranged and 
marshalled in their proper place and order, and 
ever bone come to his bone, by the same wisdom 
and power by which the bones were first formed in 
the womb of her that is with child. Thus it was in 
the return of the Jews; they that were scattered in 
several parts of the province of Babylonia, came 
to the borders of Cilicia, and had abundance of 
canvass and content, to the general rendezvous, in order to their 
return. By degrees sinneras and flesh came upon these 
bones, and the skin covered them, v. 8. This was 
fulfilled when the captives got their effects about 
them, and the men of their place helped them with 
silver and gold, and whatever they needed for their 
remove, Ezra i. 4. But still there was no breath in 
their nostrils, or motion, for such a service was very 
difficult and hazardous an enterprise as this was of 
returning to their own land.

[2.] Ezekiel then looked up, and prophesied to the 
wind, or breath, or spirit, and said, Come, O breath, 
and breathe upon these slain; as good have been 
still dry bones, as dead bodies: but as for God, his 
work is perfect; he is not the God of the dead, but 
of the living; therefore breathe upon them that they 
may live. In answer to this request, the breath im-
mEDIATELY came into them, v. 10. Note, The spirit 
of life is from God; he at first drew the air into 
man the breath of life, and so he will, at last, in the resurrection. The dispirted, despair-
ing captives were wonderfully animated with reso-
lution to break through all the discouragements that 
lay in the way of their return, and applied them-
selves to it with all imaginable vigour. And then 
they stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great 
army; not only the whole army, but effective men, 
fit for service in the wars, and formidable to all who 
gave them any opposition. Note, With God there is 
nothing impossible. He can out of stones raise up 
children unto Abraham, and out of dead and dry, 
bones levy an exceeding great army to fight his bat-
tles and plead his cause.

11. The application of this vision to the present, 
cumulative condition of the Jews in captivity. 
These bones are the whole house of Israel, both the 
ten tribes and the two. See in this what we are, 
and what they shall be.

1. The depth of despair to which they are now 
reduced, v. 11. They all give up themselves for 
lost and gone; they say, "Our bones are dried, our 
strength exhausted, our spirits gone, our hope is 
utterly lost," every one for himself. And the 
previ-
dence in the deliverance of the Jews, and we read 
of the noise of their wings, (Ezek. i. 24.) and the 
sound of their going, 2 Sam. v. 24. And behold, a 
shaking, or commotion, among the bones; even 
dead and dry bones begin to move, when they are 
called to hear the word of the Lord. This was ful-
cilled when, upon Cyrus's proclamation of liberty, 
those whose spirits God had stirred up, began to 
think of making use of that liberty, and getting 
ready to be gone; when there was a noise, behold, 
a shaking; when David heard the sound of the go-
ing on the tops of the mulberry-trees, then he be-
strider himself; then there was a shaking. When 
Paul heard the voice saying, Why persecutest thou 
me? Behold, a shaking of the dry bones; he trem-
bled and was astonished. But this was not all, The 
bones came together bone to his bone, under a divine 
direction; and though there are in man a multitude 
of bones, yet of all the bones of all these numerous 
slain not one was missing, not one missed its way, 
not one missed its place, but, as it were by instinct, 
each knew and found its fellow; the dispersed bones 
came together, and the displaced bones were knit 
together; the divine power supplying that to these 
dead bones which God had fitted for active and 
active purpose. 
Thus shall it be in the resurrection of the 
dead; the scattered atoms shall be arranged and 
marshalled in their proper place and order, and 
ever bone come to his bone, by the same wisdom 
and power by which the bones were first formed in 
the womb of her that is with child. Thus it was in 
the return of the Jews; they that were scattered in 
several parts of the province of Babylonia, came 
to the borders of Cilicia, and had abundance of 
canvass and content, to the general rendezvous, in order to their 
return. By degrees sinneras and flesh came upon these 
bones, and the skin covered them, v. 8. This was 
fulfilled when the captives got their effects about 
them, and the men of their place helped them with 
silver and gold, and whatever they needed for their 
remove, Ezra i. 4. But still there was no breath in 
their nostrils, or motion, for such a service was very 
difficult and hazardous an enterprise as this was of 
returning to their own land.

15. The word of the Lord came again unto me, saying, 16. Moreover, thou son of man, take one 
stick, and write upon it, For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions: then take another stick, and 
write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel his companions: 17. And join them one to another 
into one stick, and they shall become one in
thy hand. 18. And when the children of thy people shall speak unto thee, saying, Wilt thou not shew us what thou meanest by these? 19. Say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, even with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in my hand. 20. And the sticks wherein thou writest shall be in thy hand before their eyes. 21. And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land: 22. And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all: 23. Neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions: but I will save them out of all their dwelling-places wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them: so shall they be my people, and I will be their God. 24. And David my servant shall be king over them: and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them. 25. And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they and their children, and their children's children, for ever; and my servant David shall be their prince for ever. 26. Moreover, I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. 27. My tabernacle also shall be with them; yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 28. And the heathen shall know that I the Lord do sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore.

Here are more exceeding great and precious promises made of the happy state of the Jews after their return to their own land; but they have a further reference to the kingdom of the Messiah, and the glories of gospel-times. 1. It is here promised, that Ephraim and Judah shall be happily united in brotherly love and mutual services; so that, whereas, ever since the desertion of the ten tribes from the house of David under Jeroboam, there had been continual feuds and animosities between the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah, and it is to be feared, there had been some clashing between them even in the land of their captivity, (Ephraim upon all occasions envying Judah, and Judah vexing Ephraim,) now it should be no longer, but there should be a coalition between them, and, notwithstanding the old differences that had been between them, they should agree to love one another, and to do one another all good offices. This is here illustrated by a sign; the prophet was to take two sticks, and write upon one, For Judah, and upon the other, For Joseph, including Benjamin; those of the children of Israel that were his companions; upon the other, For Joseph, including the rest of the tribes, v. 16. These two sticks must be so framed as to fall into one in his hand, v. 17. The people took notice of this, and desired him to tell them the meaning of it, for they knew he did not play with sticks for his diversion, as other men did. The meaning, should ask the meaning, of the word of God, which they read and hear, and of the instituted signs by which spiritual and divine things are represented to us; the minister's lips should keep the knowledge thereof, and the people should ask it at their mouth, Mal. ii. 7. It is a necessary question for grown people, as well as children, to ask, What mean ye by this service, by this sign? Ezek. ii. 21. The meaning was, that Judah and Israel should be come one in the hand of God, v. 19. (1.) They shall be one; one nation, v. 22. They shall have no separate interests, and, consequently, no divided affections. There shall be no mutual jealousies and animosities, no remembrance, no remains, of their former discord. But there shall be a perfect agreement between them; a good understanding one of another, a good disposition one to another, and a readiness to all good offices and services for one another's credit and comfort. They had been two sticks crossing and thwarting one another, nay, beating and bruising one another; but now they shall become one, supporting and strengthening one another. (2.) It is not only in the political relation, but is proportionately more efficient. Behold, how good and how pleasant a thing it is to see Judah and Israel, that had long been at variance, now dwelling together in unity. Then they shall become acceptable to their God, amiable to their friends, and formidable to their enemies, Isa. xl. 13, 14. (2.) They shall be one in God's hand; by his power they shall be united, and being by his power united, his hand shall be with them together, so that they shall not fly off, to be separated again. They shall be one in his hand, for his glory shall be the centre of their unity, and his grace the cement of it. In him, in a regard to him, and in his service and worship, they shall unite, and so shall become one. Both sides shall agree to put themselves into his hand, and so they shall be one. Qui conveniunt in alippe tertio, inter se conveniunt—Those who agree in a third, agree with each other. Note, Those are best united, that are one in God's hand; whose union with each other results from their union with Christ, and their communion with God through him, Eph. i. x. One in us, John xvii. 21. (3.) They shall be one in their return out of captivity; v. 21. I will take them from among the heathen, and gather them on every side, and bring them together incorporated into one body to their own land. They shall be one in their separation from the heathen with whom they had mingled themselves: they shall both agree to part from them, and take their affections off from them, and no longer to comply with their usages, and then they will soon agree together in walking according to the rule of God's word. Their having been joint sufferers will contribute to this blessed comprehension, when they begin to come to themselves, and to consider things. Put many pieces of metal together into the furnace, and when they are melted, they will run all together. Likewise their being joint-sharers in the favour of
God, and the great and common deliverness wrought out for them all, should help to unite them. God's loving them all was a good reason why they should love one another. Times of common joy, as well as times of common suffering, should be healing, loving times. (4.) They shall all be the subjects of one new covenant; all shall become one. "The Jews after their return, were under one government, and not divided as formerly. But this certainly looks further, to the kingdom of Christ; he is that one King, in allegiance to whom all God's spiritual Israel shall cheerfully unite, and under whose protection they shall all be gathered. All believers unite in one Lord, one faith, and one baptism. And under the same kingdom, through the sameSubjects, when their becoming one fold under Christ the one great Shepherd, is doubtless the union that is chiefly looked at in this prophecy. By Christ the partition-wall between them was taken down, and the enmity slain, and of them twain was made one new man, Eph. ii. 14, 15.

2. It is here promised that the Jews shall by their captivity be cured of their inclination to idolatry; this shall be the happy fruit of that affliction, even taking away of their sin; (v. 23.) Neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, those detestable, defiling things, no, nor with any of their former transgressions. Note, When one sin is sincerely parted with, all sin is abandoned too, for he that hates sin, as sin, will hate all sin. And those that are tried of temptation in this pusillanimous and demented affection to the world and the flesh, that no longer make a god of their money, or their belly, have a happy blow given to the root of all their transgressions. Two ways God will take to cure them of their idolatry; (1.) By bringing them out of the way of temptation to it; "I will save them out of all their dwelling-places wherein they have sinned, but that they shall have no more occasion to return to the allurements of it." Note, It is our wisdom to avoid the places where we have been overcome by temptations to sin, not to remain in them, or return to them, but to save ourselves out of them, as we would out of infected places; See Zech. ii. 7. Rev. xviii. 4. And it is a great mercy when God, in his providence, saves us out of the dwelling-places where we have dwelt, and keeps us from harm, by keeping us out of harm's way in answer to our prayer, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. (2.) By changing the disposition of their mind; "I will cleanse them; (v. 28.) I will sanctify them, they shall work in them an aversion to the pollutions of sin, and a complacency in the pleasures of holiness; and then you may be sure they will not defile themselves any more with their idols." Whom God has cleansed he will keep clean.

3. It is here promised that they shall be the people of God, as their God, and the subjects and heirs of Christ their King and Shepherd. These promises we had before, and they are here repeated, (v. 23, 24,) for the encouragement of the faith of Israel; They shall be my people, to serve me, and I will be their God, to save them, and to make them happy. David my servant shall be king over them, to fight their battles, to protect them from injury, and to rule them, and overrule all things that concern them for their good. He shall be their Shepherd, and they shall know it, and provide for them; Christ is David, Israel's King of old; and those whom he subdues to himself, and makes willing in the day of his power, he makes to be his people in the age of redemption, and to keep his statutes. 4. It is here promised that they shall dwell comfortably, v. 25, 26. They shall dwell in the land of Israel; for where else should Israelites dwell? And many things will concur to make their dwelling agreeable. (1.) They shall have it by covenant; they shall come in again upon their old title of the grant made unto Jacob, God's servant. As Christ was David, God's Servant, so the church is Jacob, his servant too; and the members of the church shall come in for a share, as born in God's house. He will make a covenant of peace with them, (v. 26,) and, in pursuance of that covenant, he will do them good, and provide for them, (v. 25.) Temporal mercies are then doubly sweet, when they come from the promise of the covenant, and not merely from common providence. (2.) They shall come to it by prescription; "It is the land wherein your fathers have dwelt, and for that reason you cannot but have a special kindness for it, which God will graciously gratify." It was the inheritance of their ancestors, and they were sent from thence, and therefore their becoming one fold under Christ the one great Shepherd, is doubtless the union that is chiefly looked at in this prophecy. By Christ the partition-wall between them was taken down, and the enmity slain, and of them twain was made one new man, Eph. ii. 14, 15.

5. It is here promised that God will dwell among them; and this will make them dwell comfortably indeed; I will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore; my tabernacle also shall be with them, v. 26, 27. (1.) They shall have the tokens of God's special presence with them, and his gracious residence among them. God will in very deed dwell with them upon the earth, for whose sanctuaries he is, and whose special residence they shall have, for he took it from them, (Is. lv. 11.) but now that they are purified, God will dwell with them again. (2.) They shall have opportunity of conversing with God, of hearing from him, speaking to him, and keeping up communion with him, which will be the comfort of their lives. (3.) They shall have the means of grace. By the oracles of God in his tabernacles they shall be made wiser and better, and all their children shall be taught of the Lord. (4.) Thus their covenant-relation to God shall be improved, and the bond of it strengthened; "I will be their God, and they shall be my people, and they shall know it by having my sanctuary among them, and shall have the comfort of it!" 6. Both God and Israel shall have the honour of this among the heathen, v. 26. Now the heathen observe how Israel had profaned their own crown by their sins, and God has profaned it by his judgments; but when Israel is reformed, and God is returned in mercy to them, the very heathen shall be made to know that the Lord sanctifies Israel, has a title to them, and an interest in them, more than other people, because his sanctuary is, and shall be, in the midst of them. Note, God designs the sanctification of these among whom he sets up his sanctuary. And blessed and holy are they who, enjoying the privileges of the sanctuary, give such proofs and evidences of their sanctification, that the heathen may know it is no less than the almighty
EZEKIEL, XXXVIII.

This chapter, and that which follows it, are concerning
Gog and Magog, a powerful enemy to the people of Is-
rael, that should make a formidable descent upon them,
and put them into a consternation; but their army should
be routed, and their design defeated; and this prophecy,
it is most probable, had its accomplishment some time
after the return of the people of Israel out of their cap-
tivity, when the mysteries referred to the king of Per-
sia, especially Antiochus Epiphanes, or perhaps in
some other way not recorded, we cannot tell. If the
sacred history of the Old Testament had reached as far
as the prophecy, we should have been better able to un-
derstand these chapters, but, for want of that key, we
are locked out of the meaning of them. God had by
the prophet assured his people of happy times after their
return to their own land; but lest they should mistake
the promises which related to the kingdom of the Mes-
siah, and the spiritual privileges of that kingdom, as if
from them they might promise themselves an uninter-
rupled prosperity, he here tells them, as Christ
told his disciples, to prevent the like mistake, that in
the world they shall have tribulation, but they may be
of good cheer, for they shall be victorious at last. This
prophecy here of Gog and Magog without doubt,
alluded to in that prophecy which relates to the latter
days, and which seems to be yet unfulfilled, Rev. xx. 8.
That Gog and Magog shall be gathered to battle against
the church, as the Old Testament prophecies of the de-
struction of Babylon are alluded to, Rev. xvi. 11. But
in both, the Old Testament prophecies had their
accomplishment in the Jewish church, as the New Te-
sament prophecies have with a present fulfillment in
the Christian church. In this chapter, we have inter-
mixed, I. The attempt that Gog and Magog shall make
upon the lands of Israel, the vast army they shall
bring into the field, and their vast preparations. v. 1.
Their project and design is in it, v. 8.-13. God's hand in
it, v. 14. II. The great terror that this should strike
upon the land of Israel, v. 15, 16, 18, 20. III. The
divine restraint that these enemies should be under, and
the divine protection that Israel should be under, v. 21.
And again, v. 14. IV. The defeat that should be
given to these enemies by the immediate hand of God
(v. 21, 23.) which we shall hear more of in the next
cap.

1. And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying;
2. Son of man, set thy face against Gog, the land of Ma-
gog, the chief prince of Meschech and Tu-
bal, and prophesy against him. 3. And say;
Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I am
against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of
Meschech and Tubal: 4. And I will turn
thee back, and put hooks into thy jaws, and
I will bring thee forth, and all thy army,
horses and horsemen, all of them clothed
with all sorts of armour, even a great com-
pany with bucklers and shields, all of them
handling swords. 5. Persia, Ethiopia, and
Libya with them; all of them with shield
and helmet: 6. Gomer, and all his bands;
the house of Tabernach of the north quar-
ters, and all his bands; and many people
with thee. 7. Be thou prepared, and pre-
pare for thyself, thou, and all thy company
that are assembled unto thee, and be thou
a guard unto them. 8. After many days
thou shalt be visited: in the latter years
thou shalt come into the land that is brought
back from the sword, and is gathered out
of many people, against the mountains
of Israel, which have been always waste: but
it is brought forth out of the nations, and
they shall dwell safely all of them. 9.
Thou shalt ascend and come like a storm,
thou shalt be like a cloud to cover the land,
thou and all thy bands, and many people
with thee. 10. Thus saith the Lord God,
It shall also come to pass, that at the same
time shall things come into thy mind, and
thou shalt think an evil thought: 11. And
thou shalt say, I will go up to the land
of unwalled villages; I will go to them that
are at rest, that dwell safely, all of them
dwelling without walls, and having neither
bars nor gates, 12. To take a spoil, and
to take a prey; to turn thy hand upon the
desolate places that are now inhabited, and
upon the people that are gathered out of
the nations, which have gotten cattle and
goods, that dwell in the midst of the land. 13.
Sheba, and Dedan, and the merchants of
Tarshish, with all the young lions thereof,
say unto thee, Art thou come to take a
spoil? hast thou gathered thy company
to take a prey? to carry away silver and
gold, to take away cattle and goods, to take
a great spoil?

The critical expositors have enough to do here to
inquire out Gog and Magog: we cannot pretend
either to add to their observations, or to determine
their controversies; Gog seems to be the king,
and Magog the kingdom: so that Gog and Magog are
like Pharaoh and the Egyptians. Some think they
find them afar off, in Scythia, Tartary, and Russia.
Others think they find them nearer the land of Israel,
in Syria, and Asia the less. Ezekiel is appointed
to prophesy against Gog, and to tell him that God is
against him and all his bands. Next he shall be those
that are now the enemies of his church, and set
himself against them, but he foresees these that
will be so, and lets them know by his word that he
is against them too, and yet is pleased to make use
of them to serve his own purposes, for the glory of
his own name; surely their wrath shall praise him,
and the remainder thereof he will restrain, Ps.
xxxvii. 10. Let us observe hence, as God is the com-
fort of his people, thus careful that they may not
be frightened; even before the trouble begins, he
tells them it will end well.

11. The undertaking which he designed to engage
him in, in order to this defeat and disappointment,
1. The nations that shall be confederate in this
enterprise against Israel, are many, and great,
in number; 2. Gog and Magog; Persia, Ethiopia,
&c. Antiochus had an army made up of all the nations
here named, and many others. These people had been at
variety with one another, and yet in combination
against Israel. How are they increased that trouble God's people!

2. They are well furnished with arms and ammunition, and bring a good train of artillery into the field; horses and horsemen, (v. 4.) bravely equipped with all sorts of armour, bucklers and shields for defence, and all handling swords for offence. Orders are given to come to heaven. It is not long since this expedition; (v. 7.) "Be thou prepared, and do thou prepare. See what warlike preparations thou hast already in store, and, lest that should not suffice, make further preparation, thou and all thy company." Let Gog himself be a guard to the rest of the confederates. As commander in chief, let him engage to take care of them and their safety; let him pass his word for their security, and take their interest, the leaders of an army, instead of exposing their soldiers needlessly and presumptuously, and throwing away their lives upon desperate undertakings, should study to be a guard to them, and, whenever they send forth in danger, should contrive to support and cover them. This call to prepare seems to be ironical; Do thy worst, but I will turn thee back; like the man who said, (v. 9.) Gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces.

3. Their design is against the mountains of Israel, (v. 8.) against the land that is brought back from the sword. It is not long since it was harassed with the sword of war, and it has been always wasted, more or less, with one judgment or other; it is but newly gathered out of many people, and brought forth out of the nations; it has enjoyed comfort for some time; it has recovered any strength since it was brought down by war and captivity; and therefore its neighbours need not fear its being too great, now, and therefore it is very barbarous to pick a quarrel with it so soon. It is a people that dwell safely, all of them, in unwalled villages, very secure, and having neither bars nor gates, v. 11. It is a certain sign that they intend no mischief to their neighbours, for they fear no mischief from them. It cannot be thought that they will offend others, who do not take care to defend themselves; and it aggravates the sin of these invaders. It is base and barbarous to devise evil against thy neighbour, while he dwells securely by thee, and has no distrust of thee, Prov. iii. 29. But see here how the clouds return after the rain in this world, and what little reason we have ever to be so secure as that. Gog and Magog, as the Edomites, and those who are their allies, were brought back from the sword of one enemy, and beheld, the sword of another is drawn against it; former troubles will not excuse us from further troubles; but when we think we have put off the harness, at least for some time, by a fresh and sudden alarm we may be called to gird it on again; and therefore we must never boast, or be off our guard.

4. That which the enemy has in view, in forming his project, is, to enrich himself, and to make himself master, not of the country, but of the wealth of it, to spoil and plunder it, and make a prey of it; At the same time that God intends to bring this matter about, things shall come into the mind of this enemy, and he shall think an evil to befall thee, v. 10. Note, All the mischief that he does, and particularly the great mischief he does to the church of God, arises from evil thoughts that come into their mind; ambitious thoughts, covetous thoughts, sly thoughts to those that are good, for the sake of their goodness. It came into Antichrist's mind what a singular people these religious Jews were, and how their worship witnessed against and condemned the idolatries of their neighbours, and therefore, in enmity to their religion, he would plague them. It came into his mind what a wealthy people they were, that they had gotten cattle and goods in the midst of the land, (v. 12.) and withal how weak they were, and how unable to make any resistance, and how easy it would be to carry off what they had, and how much glory this rapine would add to his victorious sword; these things coming into his mind, and one evil thought drawing upon another, v. 11. (12.) I will go up to the land of unwalled villages; yea, that I will, it will cost me nothing to make them all my own; I will go, and disturb them that are at rest, without giving them any notice; not to crush their growing greatness, or chastise their insolence, or make reprisals upon them for any wrong they have done us; (they had none of these pretences to make their war upon them, but purely to take a prey, and to take a prey,) v. (12.) in open defiance to all the laws of justice and equity, as much as the highwayman's killing the traveller, that he may take his money. These were the thoughts that came into the mind of this wicked prince, and God knew them; nay, he knew them before they came into his mind, for he understands our thoughts afar off, Ps. cxxxix. 2.

According to the project thus formed, he pours in all his forces upon the land of Israel; and finds those that are ready to come in to his assistance, with the same projects; (v. 9.) "Thou shalt ascend, and come like a storm, with all the force and fury and fierceness imaginable, and thou shalt be like a cloud to cover the land, to darken it, and to threaten it. Thou, and not only thy bands, all thy forces thou must bring into the field, but many people with thee," (such as are spoken of, v. 15.) "Sheba and Dedan, the Arabians and Edomites, and the merchants of Tarshish, of Tyre and Sidon, and other maritime cities, they and their young lions that are greedy of spoil and live upon it, they shall say, Art thou come to take the spoil of this land?" Yes, he is. And therefore they wish him success; or perhaps they envy him, or grudge it him. "Art thou come for riches, who art thyself so rich already?" Or, knowing that God was on Israel's side, they thus ridicule his attempts, foreseeing that they would be baffled, and that he would be disappointed of the prey he promised himself. Or, if he be come to take the prey, they will come, and join with him, and add to his forces. When LyDia, who was general of Antiochus's army, came to Antiochus, he and those that joined with him, (1 Mac. iii. 41.) to share in the guilt, in hopes to share in the prey. When thou savest a thief, then thou comestest with him.

14. Therefore, son of man, prophesy and say unto Gog, Thus saith the Lord God, In that day when my people of Israel dwell eth safely, shalt thou not know it? 15. And thou shalt come from thy place out of the north parts, thou, and many people with thee, all of them riding upon horses, a great company, and a mighty army: 16. And thou shalt come up against my people of Israel as a cloud to cover the land; it shall be in the latter days, and I will bring thee against my land, that the heathen may know me, when I shall be sanctified in thee, O Gog, before their eyes. 17. Thus saith the Lord God, Art thou he of whom I have spoken in old time by my servants the prophets of Israel, which prophesied in those days many years, that I would bring
three against them? 18. And it shall come to pass at the same time, when Gog shall come against the land of Israel, saith the Lord God, that my fury shall come up in my face. 19. For in my jealousy, and in the fire of my wrath, have I spoken. Surely in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel; 20. So that the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the field, and all creeping things that creep upon the earth, and all the men that are upon the face of the earth, shall shake at my presence; and the mountains shall be thrown down, and the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground. 21. And I will call for a sword against him throughout all my mountains, saith the Lord God: every man’s sword shall be against his brother. 22. And I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood; and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire and brimstone. 23. Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify myself; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations; and they shall know that I am the Lord.

The latter part of the chapter is a repetition of the former; the dream is doubled, for the thing is certain, and to be very carefully regarded.

1. It is here again foretold that this spiteful enemy should make a formidable descent upon the land of Israel; (v. 15.) Thou shalt come out of the north parts (Syria lay on the north of Canaan) with a mighty army, shalt come like a cloud, and cover the land of my people Israel, v. 16. These words, (v. 14.) When my people Israel dwell safely, shalt thou not know it? may be taken two ways: either, 1. As speaking a promise to the effect of that attempt. “Thou shalt have intelligence before thee, securely, and therefore how carelessly, the people of Israel dwell, which shall give rise to thy project against them; for when thou knowest not only what a rich, but what an easy prey they are likely to be, thou wilt soon determine to fall upon them.” Note, God’s providence is to be acknowledged in the occasion; the small occasion, perhaps, that is given, and that not designedly neither, to those first thoughts from which great enterprises take their original. God, to bring about his own purposes, lets men know that which yet he knows they will make bad use of; as here. Or, 2. As speaking his disappointment in this attempt; which here, as before, the prophecy begins with; “When my people Israel dwell safely, not in their own appre hension only, but in reality, forasmuch as they dwell safely under the divine protection, shalt thou not be made to know it by the fruitfulness of thine endeavours to destroy them? Thou shalt soon find that there is no enchanment against Jacob, that no weapon formed against them shall prosper; thou shalt know to thy cost, shalt know to thy shame, that though they have no guards to watch over to guard them, they have God himself, a Wall of fire, round about him, and that he who touches them, touches the apple of his eye; whatsoever meddles with them, meddles to his own hurt.” And it is for the demonstrating of this to all the world that God will bring this mighty enemy against his people. They that gathered themselves against Israel, said, Let us take the spoil, and take the prey, but they knew not the thoughts of the Lord, Mic. iv. 11, 12. I will bring thee against my land; This is strange news, that God will not only permit his enemies to come against his own children, but will himself bring them against them? But when we shall be well reconciled even to this, it is, that the heathen may know me to be the only living and true God, when I shall be sanctified in thee, O Gog, in thy defeat and destruction before their eyes; that all the nations may see, and say, There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, that rides on the heavens, for the help of his people. Note, God therefore brings his people into danger, and thereby may have the honour of bringing about their deliverance; and therefore suffers the enemies of his church to prevail awhile, though they profane his name by their sin, that he may have the honour of prevailing at last, and sanctifying his own name in their ruin. Now it is said, This shall be in the latter days, in the latter days of the Old Testament church; so that this is the withering out of the latter days of the former; Israel was, but in the latter days of the New Testament church, another like enemy should arise, that should in like manner be defeated. Note, Effectual securities are treasured up in the word of God against the troubles and dangers the church may be brought into during a great while hence, even in the latter days.

II. Reference is here had to the predictions of the former prophecies. (v. 17.) Art thou he of whom I have spoken in old time, who dwellest in Mesopotamia in his prophecy of the latter days? (Deut. xxxii. 43.) He will render vengeance to his adversaries; and David, (Ps. iv. 15.) The heathen are sunk down into the pit that they made; and often elsewhere in the Psalms. This is the leviation of whom Isaiah spake, (Isa. xxvii. 1.) that congress of the nations of which Joel spake, Joel iii. 4. Many of the prophets had perhaps spoken particularly of this event, though it be not written; as they all had spoken, and written too, that which is applicable to it. Note, There is an amiable, admirable harmony and agreement between the Lord’s prophets, though they lived in several ages, for they were all guided by one and the same Spirit.

As. It is said, That this furious, formidable enemy should be utterly cut off in this attempt upon Israel, and that it should issue in his own ruin. This is supposed by many to have its accomplishment in the many defeats given by the Maccabees to the forces of Antiochus, and the remarkable judgments of God executed upon his own person, for he died of sore diseases. But these things are here foretold as usual, in figurative expressions, which we are not to look for the literal accomplishment of, and yet they might be fulfilled nearly as the letter as we know of.

1. God will be highly displeased with this bold invader; When he comes up in pride and anger against the land of Israel, and thinks to carry all before him with a high hand, then God’s fury shall come up in his face; which is an allusion to the manner of men who look for the literal accomplishment when some high affront is offered them, and they are resolved to show their resentments of it, v. 18. God will speak against them in his jealousy for his people, and in the fire of his wrath against his and their enemies, v. 19. See how God’s permitting sin, his laying occasions of sin before men, and his permitting men to serve his own purposes, consists with his hatred of sin, and with his use of it. God brings this enemy against his land, letting him know what an easy prey it might be, and determining thereby to glorify himself; and yet, when
be comes against the land, God's fury comes up; and he speaks to him in the fire of his wrath. If any ask, Why does he thus find fault? For who has resisted his will? It is easy to answer, Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? 2. His forces shall be put into the greatest confusion and consternation, imagineable; (v. 19.) There shall be a great shaking of them in the land of Israel, a uniter of spirits, and a marshalling of men, as if they knew not where to place themselves; and they shall be affected, and the fishes and fowls, the beasts and creeping things, and much more the men that are upon the face of the earth, who sooner receive impressions of fear; there shall be such an earthquake as shall throw down the mountains, those natural heights, and the steep places, towers and walls, those artificial heights, they shall all fall to the ground. Some understand this of the fright which the land of Israel should be put into by the fury of the enemy. But it is rather to be understood of the fright which the enemy should be put into by the wrath of God; all those things which they both raise themselves, and stay themselves, upon, shall be shaken down, and their hearts shall fail them. 3. He shall be roared, and utterly ruined; both earth and hills shall be lifted up against him; (v. 21.) The earth shall gather up its forces to destroy him. If the people of Israel have not strength and courage to resist him, God will call for a sword against him, v. 21. And he has swords always at command, that are bated in heaven, Isa. xxxvi. 5. Throughout all the mountains of Israel, where he hoped to meet with spoil to enrich him, he shall meet with swords to destroy him, and, rather than fall, every man shall be the enemy of his brother in the day of Midian. Ps. lxxxiii. 9. The great men of Syria shall undermine and overthrow one another, shall accuse one another, shall fight duels with one another. Note, God can, and often does, make the destroyers of his people to be their own destroyers, and the destroyers of one another. However, he will himself be their Destroyer, will take the work into his own hand, that it may be done thoroughly; (v. 22.) I will plead against him with pestilence and blood. Note, Whom God acts against he pleads against; he shows them the ground of his controversy with them, that their mouths may be stopped, and he may be clear when he judges. (2.) The artillery of heaven shall also be drawn out against them; I will rain upon him an overflowing rain, v. 22. He came upon Israel, v. 9. But God will come like a storm upon him; will rain upon him great hailstones, as upon the Canaanites, (Josh. x. 11.) fire and brimstone, as upon Sodom, and a horrible tempest. Ps. xi. 6. Thus the God and Magog in the New Testament shall be devoured with fire from heaven, and cast into the lake of brimstone, Rev. xx. 9, 10. That will be the everlasting portion of all the impenitent, implacable enemies of God's church and name. 4. God, in all this, will be glorified. The end he aimed at, (v. 16.) shall be accomplished; (v. 23.) Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify myself. Note, In the destruction of sinners, God makes it to appear that he is a great and holy God, and he will do so to eternity. And if men do not magnify and sanctify him as they ought, he will magnify himself, and sanctify himself; and this we should desire and pray for daily, Father, glorify thine own name.

CHAP. XXXIX.

This chapter continues and concludes the prophecy against Gog and Magog; in whose destruction God crowns his favour to his church and name. Everything grows bright after the scattering of that black cloud in the close of this chapter. Here is, I. An express prediction of the utter destruction of Gog and Magog, agreeing with what we had before, v. 1, 2, 7. II. An illustration of the vastness of that destruction, in three consequences of it; the burning of their weapons, (v. 8, 10.) the burying of their slain, (v. 11, 16.) and the feasting of the fowls with the dead bodies of those that were unburied, v. 17, 22. III. A declaration of God's gracious purposes concerning his people Israel, in this and his other providences concerning them, and a promise of further mercy that he had yet in store for them, v. 23, 29.

1. THEREFORE, thou son of man, prophesy against Gog, and say, Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal; 2. And I will turn thee back, and leave but the sixth part of thee, and will cause thee to come up from the north parts, and will bring thee upon the mountains of Israel: 3. And I will smite thy bow out of thy left hand, and will cause thine arrows to fall out of thy right hand. 4. Thou shalt fall upon the mountains of Israel, thou, and all thy bands, and the people that is with thee: I will give thee unto the ravenous birds of every sort, and to the beasts of the field, to be devoured. 5. Thou shalt fall upon the open field; for I have spoken it, saith the Lord God. 6. And I will send a fire on Magog, and among them that dwell carelessly in the isles; and they shall know that I am the Lord. 7. So will I make my holy name known in the midst of my people Israel; and I will not let them pollute my holy name any more; and the heathen shall know that I am the Lord, the Holy One in Israel.

This prophecy begins, as that before, ch. xxxviii. 3, 4. I am against thee, and I will turn thee back; for there is need of line upon line, both for the conviction of Israel's enemies, and the comfort of Israel's friends. Here, as there, it is foretold that God will bring this enemy from the north parts, as formerly the Chaldeans were fetched from the sea, Jer. x. 14. (Omne malum ab aqua.) "Every evil comes from the north," and, long after the Roman empire was overrun by the northern nations; that he will bring him upon the mountains of Israel; (v. 2.) first, as a place of temptation, where the measures of his iniquity shall be filled up, and then, as a place of execution, where his ruin shall be completed. And that is it which is here enlarged upon.

1. His soldiers shall be disarmed, and so disabled to carry on their enterprise. Though the men of might may find their hands, yet to what purpose, when they find it is put out of their power to do mischief, when God shall smite their bow out of their left hand, and their arrow out of their right? v. 5. Note, The weapons formed against Zion shall not prosper.

2. He and the greatest part of his army shall be slain in the field of battle; (v. 4.) Thou shalt fall upon the mountains of Israel; there they sinned, and there they shall perish, even upon the holy mountains of Israel, for there brake he the arrows of the bow, Ps. lxxvi. 5. The mountains of Israel shall be moistened, and fattened, and made fruitful, with the blood of their enemies. "Then shall fall upon the open field, (v. 3.) and shall not be able even there to make thine escape." Even upon the mountains he shall not find a pass that he shall
be able to maintain, and upon the open field he shall not find a road that he shall be able to make his escape by. He, and his bands, his regular troops, and the people that are with him, that follow the camp to share in the plunder, these shall all fall with him. Note, Those that cast in their lot among wicked people, (Prov. 1:14.) that they may have one purse with them, must expect to trade with them, and fare as they fare, taking the worse with the better. There shall be such a general slaughter made, that but a sixth part shall be left, (v. 2.) the other five shall all be cut off. Never was army so totally routed as this. And, for its greater infamy and reproach, their bodies shall be a feast to the birds of prey, v. 4. Compare v. 17. Thou shalt fall, for I have spoken it. Note, Rather shall the most illustrious princes, (Antiochus was called Ephialtes, the illusorium,) and the most numerous armies, fall to the ground, than any word of God; for he that has spoken, will make it good.

3. His country also shall be made desolate; I will send a fire on Meggitt, (v. 6.) and among them that dwell carelessly, or confidently, in the cities, the nations of the Gentiles. He designed to deal so with the land, but shall be defeated in that design, but shall have his own destroyed by some fire, some consuming judgment or other. Note, Those who invade other people's rights, justly lose their own.

4. God will by all this advance the honour of his own name. (1.) Among his people Israel; they shall hereby know more of God's name, of his power and goodness, his care of them, his faithfulness to them; his providence concerning them; they shall understand him into a better acquaintance with him; every providence shall do, as well as every ordinance; I will make my holy name known in the midst of my people. In Judah is God known; but those that know much of God, should know more of him; we should especially increase in the knowledge of his name as a holy name. Know him as a God of perfect purity and rectitude, and that hates all sin. And then it follows, I will not let them pollute my holy name any more. Note, Those that rightly know God's holy name, will not dare to profane it; for it is through ignorance of it that men make light of it; and make bold with it. And this is God's method of dealing with men; first, to enlighten their understandings, and by that means to influence the whole; so that men might come to know his holy name, and so keep us from polluting it, and engages us to honour it. And this is here the blessed effect of God's glorious appearances on the behalf of his people. Thus he completes his favours, thus he sanctifies them, thus he makes them blessings indeed; by them he instructs his people, and reforms them. When the Almighty scattered kings for her, she was white as snow in Salmon, Ps. lviii. 14. (2.) Among the heathen; those that never knew it, or would not own it, shall know that I am the Lord, the Holy One in Israel. They shall be made to know by dear-bought experience, that he is a God of power, and his people's God and Saviour; and it is in vain for the greatest potentates to contend with him; none ever hardened their heart against him, and prospered.

8. Behold, it is come, and it is done, saith the Lord God; this is the day whereof I have spoken. 9. And they that dwell in the cities of Israel shall go forth, and shall set on fire and burn the weapons, both the shields and the bucklers, the bows and the arrows, and the hand-staves, and the spears, and they shall burn them with fire seven years. 10. So that they shall take no wood out of the field, neither cut down any out of the forests; for they shall burn the weapons with fire: and they shall spoil those that spoiled them, and rob those that robbed them, saith the Lord God. 11. And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will give unto Gog a place there of graves in Israel, the valley of the passengers on the east of the sea, and it shall stop the noses of the passengers: and there shall they bury Gog, and all his multitude; and they shall call it, The valley of Hamon-gog. 12. And seven months shall the house of Israel be burying of them, that they may cleanse the land. *13. Yea, all the people of the land shall bury them; and it shall be to them a renown, the day that I shall be glorified, saith the Lord God. 14. And they shall sever out men of continual employment, passing through the land, to bury with the passengers those that remain upon the face of the earth, to cleanse it: after the end of seven months shall they search. 15. And the passengers that pass through the land, when any seeth a man's bone, then shall he set up a sign by it, till the buriers have buried it in the valley of Hamon-gog. 16. And also the name of the city shall be Hamon-mah. Thus shall they cleanse the land. 17. And thou, son of man, thus saith the Lord God, Speak unto every feathered fowl, and to every beast of the field, Assemble yourselves, and come; gather yourselves on every side to my sacrifice that I do sacrifice for you, even a great sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel, that ye may eat flesh, and drink blood. 18. Ye shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, of rams, of lambs, and of goats, of bullocks, all of them fatlings of Bashan. 19. And ye shall eat fat till ye be full, and drink blood till ye be drunken, of my sacrifice which I have sacrificed for you. 20. Thus ye shall be filled at my table with horses and chariots, with mighty men, and with all men of war, saith the Lord God. 21. And I will set my glory among the heathen, and all the heathen shall see my judgment that I have executed, and my hand that I have laid upon them. 22. So the house of Israel shall know that I am the Lord their God from that day and forward.

Though this prophecy was to have its accomplishment in the latter days, yet it is here spoken of as if it were already accomplished, because it is certain; (v. 8.) *Behold, it is come, and it is done; it is as sure to be done, when the time is come, as if it were done already; this is the day whereof I have long and often spoken, and though it has been long in
coming, yet at length it is come." Thus it was said unto John, (Rev. xxx. 6.) It is done.

To represent the routing of the army of Gog as very great, here are three things specified as the consequences of it. It was God himself that gave them the defeat; we do not find that the people of Israel drew a sword, or struck a stroke: but, I. They shall burn their weapons; their chariots and armor, and in addition to these (v. 3.) their shields and bucklers, their javelins, spears, leading-staves, truncheons and half-shakes, every thing that is combustible. They shall not lay them up in their armories, or reserve them for their own use, lest they should be tempted to put a confidence in them, but they shall burn them; not all at once, for a benefire, (to what purpose would that be?) but, as the Lord had ordained, to use them for fuel in the valley, and to burn them, instead of other fire-wood, so that they should have no occasion to take wood out of the fields or forests, for seven years together; (v. 10.) such vast quantities of weapons shall there be left upon the open field, where the enemy fell, and in the roads, which they passed in their flight. The weapons were dry, and fitter for fuel than green wood; and by saving the wood in their coppices and forests, they would have still more. Though the mountains of Israel produce plenty of all good things, yet it becomes the people of Israel to be good husbands of their plenty, and to save what they can for the benefit of those that come after them, as Providence shall give them opportunity to do so. We may suppose that when they who dwelt in the cities of Israel came forth to spoil those who spoiled them, and make reprisals upon them, they found masses of silver, and gold, and ornaments; yet no mention is made of any thing particularly that they converted to their own use, but the wood of the weapons for fuel, which is one of the necessaries of human life; to teach us to think it enough if we be well supplied with those, though we have but little of the delights and gaieties of it, and of those things which we may very well live without. And, once for all, they put fuel to the fire, and warmed themselves at it, they would be put in mind of the number and strength of their enemies, and the imminent peril they were in of falling into their hands, which would help to enlarge their hearts in thankfulness to that God who had so wonderfully, so seasonably, delivered them. As they sat by the fire with their children about them, (their fire-side.) they might from it take occasion to tell them what great things God had done for them.

II. They shall bury their dead. Usually, after a battle, when many are slain, the enemy desire time to bury their own dead. But here the slaughter shall be so general, that there shall not be a sufficient number of the enemies left alive to bury the dead; and besides, the slain lie so dispersed on the mountains of Israel, that it would have a work of time to come out and do it; whereas it is left to the house of Israel to bury them as a piece of triumph in their overthrow.

1. A place shall be appointed on purpose for the burying them, the valley of the passengers, on the east of the sea, either the salt sea, or the sea of Tiberias, a valley through which there was great passage and repassing of travellers between Egypt and Canaan. Here shall be such dead bodies, putrefying above ground, with such a loathsome stench, that the travellers who go that way, shall be forced to stop their noses. See what vile bodies ours are; when the soul has been a little while from them, the smell of them becomes offensive, no smell more nauseous, or more noxious. There, therefore, where the greatest number lay slain, shall be the burying-place to be appointed. It shall be a place where the tree falls, there let it lie. And it shall be called, The valley of Hamon-gog, that is, of the multitude of Gog; for that was the thing which was in a particular manner to be had in remembrance. How numerous the forces of the enemies were which God defeated and destroyed for the defence of his people Israel!

2. A considerable time shall be spent in burying them, no less than seven months; (v. 12.) which is a further intimation that the slain of the Lord in this action should be many; and that great care should be taken by the house of Israel to leave none unburied, that so they might cleanse the land from the ceremonial pollution it contracted by the lying of so many dead corpses unburied in it; for the prevention of which it was appointed that those who were hanged on a tree, should be speedily taken down, and buried. But God would have this information that times of eminent deliverances should be times of reformation. The more God has done for the saving of a land from ruin, the more the inhabitants should do for the cleansing of the land from sin.

3. Great numbers shall be employed in this work; All the people of the land shall be ready to lend a hand; (v. 18.) and besides, they shall contribute the utmost they can in his place toward the cleansing of the land from the pollutions of it, and from every thing that is a reproach to it. Sin is a common enemy which every man should take up arms against. In publico discrimine uniusque homo miles est—In the season of public danger every man becomes a soldier. And whoever shall assist in this work, it shall be to them a renown; though it be in the office of menial servants, or common scavengers of the country, seem but mean, yet, when it is for the cleansing and purifying of the land from dead works, it shall be mentioned to their honour. Note, Acts of humanity add much to the renown of God's Israel; it is a credit to religion, when those that profess it are ready to every good work; and a good work it is to bury the dead, yea, though they be strangers and enemies to the commonwealth of Israel, for even they shall rise again. It shall be a renown to them in the day when God will be glorified. Note, It is for the glory of God when his Israel do that which adorns their profession; others will see their good works, and glorify their Father, Matth. v. 16. And when God is honoured, he will put honour upon his people. His glory is their renown.

4. Some particular persons shall make it their business to search out the dead bodies, or any part of them that should remain unburied. The people of the land will soon grow weary of burying the pollutions of the country, and therefore they shall appoint men of continual employment, that shall apply themselves to it, and do nothing else till the land be thoroughly cleansed; for otherwise, that which is every one's work, should seem but the work of his.
take heed of touching it; for which reason their sepulchres among the Jews were whitened, that people might keep at a distance from them. Note, When good work is to be done, every one should lend a hand to further it, even the passengers themselves, who must not think themselves unconnected in a common calamity, or a common iniquity, to put a stop to it.

Those whose work it is to cleanse the land must not connive at any thing in it that is defiling; though it were not the body, but only the bone, of a man, that was found unburied, they must encourage those who will give information of it, private information, by a sign, concealing the informer, that they may take it away, and bury it out of sight. Nay, after the end of seven months, which was allowed for this work, when all is taken away that appeared at first view, they shall search for more, that what is hidden may be brought to light; they shall search out iniquity till they find none. In memory of this, they shall give a new name to their city. It shall be called Hamonah—The multitude.

Q What a multitude of our enemies have we of this city buried! Thus shall they cleanse the land, with all their filthiness, and in conquering there must be cleansing. Moses appointed those Israelites that had been employed in the war with the Midianites, to purify themselves, Num. xxx. 24. Having received special favours from God, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness.

III. The birds and beasts of prey shall rest upon the carcases of the slain while they remain unburied, and God's ministers, who are all taken away, shall be served by them. We find a great slaughter represented by this figure, Rev. xix. 17, &c. which is borrowed from this.

1. There is a general invitation given, v. 17. It is to the feast of every vengue, and to every beast of the field, from the greatest to the least, that preys upon carcases, from the eagle to the raven, from the lion to the dog; let them all gather themselves on every side, here is meat enough for them, and they are all welcome. Let them come to God's sacrifice, to his feast; so the margin reads it. Note, The judgments of God, executed upon sin and sinners, are both a sacrifice and a feast; a sacrifice to the justice of God, and a feast to the faith and hope of God's people. When God brake the head of levitation, he gave him to be meat to Israel, Ps. lxix. 23. The righteous shall rejoice as at a feast, and they see the vengeance, and shall wash his foot, as at a feast, in the blood of the wicked. This sacrifice is upon the mountains of Israel; these are the high places, the altars, where God has been dishonoured by the idolatries of the people, but where he will now glorify himself in the destruction of his enemies.

2. There is great preparation made; They shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, v. 18, 19. (1.) It is the flesh and blood of men that they shall be treated with. This has sometimes been an instance of the rebellion of the inferior creatures against man their master, which is an effect of his rebellion against God his Maker. (2.) It is the flesh and blood of great men, here called rams, and butlocks, and great goats, all of them failings of Balaam. It is the blood of the princes of the earth that they shall regale themselves with. What a mortification is this to the princes of the blood, as they call themselves, that God can make that blood, that royal blood which swells their veins, a feast for the birds and beasts of prey! (3.) It is the flesh and blood of wicked men, the enemies of God's church and people, that they are invited to. They had accounted the Israel of God as sheep for the slaughter, and now they shall themselves be so accounted; they had thus used the dead bodies of God's servants.

(PS. lxix. 2.) or would have done, and now it shall come upon themselves.

3. They shall all be fed, they shall all be feasted to the full; (v. 19, 20.) You shall eat fat, and drink blood, which are satiating, surfeiting things. The sacrifice is great, and the feast upon the sacrifice is accordingly; You shall be filled at my table. Note, God will keep all his iniquities, and for his iniquity he will provide food for all flesh; the eyes of all wait upon him, and he satisfies their desires, for he keeps a plentiful table. And if the birds and beasts shall be filled at God's table, which he has prepared for them, much more shall his children be abundantly satisfied with the goodness of his house, even of his holy temple. They shall be filled with horses and carriages that is, those who ride in the chariots, mighty men, and men of war, who triumph over nations, are now themselves triumphed over by the ravens of the valley and the young eagles, Prov. xxx. 17. They thought to have made an easy prey of God's Israel, and now they are themselves an easy prey to the birds and beasts. See how evil pursues sinners even after death. This exposing of their bodies to be a prey is but a type and sign of the greater destruction which shall come after death on those who have not, and do not repent of their sins, and are not reconciled to God in a way of peace. But this shall not be the case with God's people. This shall be the portion of the righteous, that they shall beviewed as God's house, and shall triumph in his presence, Ps. xxiii. 6. and Dan. xii. 1, They are the sheep of the house of Israel, and as such they shall have part in all the good things that shall come, and all the good things which God shall give, and have given, to his church.

IV. This shall redound very much both to the glory of God and to the comfort and satisfaction of his people. 1. It shall be much for the honour of God, for the heathen shall hereby be made to know that he is the Lord; (v. 21.) All the heathen shall see and observe my judgments that I have executed, and thereby my glory shall be set among them. This shall be a triumph both to the honour of God and to the benefit of his people; and thereby this is made a type of the great triump of our Lord Jesus Christ over sin and Satan, when he shall come in the clouds of heaven, with great power and great glory, and shall destroy the enemies of God, and set up his kingdom in the world, and make manifest his kingdom in the hearth and in the hearts of his people, not by war, but by peace and grace. Then shall the Lord stand for his flock against all his enemies. Then shall they come and see his glory, and shall be filled and satiated with all the good things of God, and shall have their inheritance as God's children. Then shall God's church triumph over sin and Satan, and shall be made glorious in triumph. Then shall God be glorified, and all the heathen know that he is the Lord. Then shall it be known to the nations of the earth that there is a God, and he is the Lord of hosts, and that by the power of his grace he has secured the success of his church, and that he shall be glorified in the glory of his people. Then shall God's people be made to know that he is a God of power and might, and of salvation, and of all good things, and that he shall have his portion in the land of eternity, and shall be made glorious in triumph. Then shall God's people be made to know that he is the Lord, and shall be filled with the fruits of righteousness and the sake of all good things, and shall be made to know that he is the Lord. Then shall the Lord be glorified, and all the heathen shall know that he is the Lord. Then shall the Lord be glorified, and all the heathen shall know that he is the Lord.

2. It shall be much for the satisfaction of his people; for they shall hereby be made to know that he is their God; (v. 22.) The house of Israel shall know, abundantly to their comfort, that I am the Lord their God from that day and forward. (1.) He will be so from that day and forward. God's church is made to know that God will bear witness to God's children, and that they shall not be excluded, nor any of their numbers, from the sight of the appearance of God. The Lord shall be the car of the people, and the eyes of God shall be upon it, and shall be a light to them. Thus shall the Lord be the car of the children of Israel, and the eyes of God shall be upon them, and he shall be a light to them. The Lord will be the car of his people, and the eyes of God shall be upon them, and he shall be a light to them. (2.) They shall know it with more satisfaction from that day and forward. They had sometimes been ready to question whether the Lord was with them or no; but the events of this day shall silence their doubts, and the matter being thus settled and made clear, it shall not be doubted of for the future. As boasting in themselves is hereby for ever excluded, so boasting in God is hereby for ever secured.

23. And the heathen shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity: because they trespassed against me, therefore hid I my face from them, and gave them into the hand of their enemies; so fell they all by the sword. 24. According to their uncleanness, and according to their transgressions, have I done unto them, and hid my face from them. 25. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Now will I bring again the captivity of Jacob, and have mercy upon the whole house of Israel, and will be jealous for my holy name; 26. After
that they have borne their shame, and all their trespasses, whereby they have tres-
passed against me, when they dwelt safely in their land, and none made them afraid.
27. When I have brought them again from the people, and gathered them out of their
eenemies' lands, and am sanctified in them in the sight of many nations; 28. Then shall
they know that I Am the Lord their God, which caused them to be led into captivity
among the heathen: but I have gathered them unto their own land, and have left
none of them any more there. 29. Neither will I hide my face any more from them:
for I have poured out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord God.

This is the conclusion of the whole matter going before, and has reference not only to the predictions
concerning Gog and Magog, but to all the proph-ecies of this book concerning the captivity of the
house of Israel, and then concerning their restoration and return out of their captivity.

We have often heard the meaning of his people's troubles, and rectify their mistake con-
cerning them, who took occasion from the troubles of Israel to reproach the God of Israel, as un able

to protect them, and untrue to his covenant with them. When God, upon their reformation and return to
him, turned again their captivity, and brought them back to their own land, and, upon their perseverance
in their reformation, wrought such great sub-

servations on them, that from the attempts of Gog upon them, then it will be made to appear, even to
the heathen that will but consider and compare things, that there was no ground at all for their re-
flection; that Israel went into captivity, not because God could not protect them, but because they had
by sin forfeited his favour, and thrown themselves out of his protection; (v. 23, 24.) The heathen shall
know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity, that iniquity which they learned
from the heathen their neighbours; because they trespassed against God. That was the true reason
why God hid his face from them, and gave them into the hand of their enemies. It was according to
their uncleaness, and according to their transgres-
sions. Now the evincing of this will not only silence their reflections on God, but will redound greatly to
his honour; when the troubles of God's people are over, and we see the end of them, we shall better
understand them than we did at first. And it will appear much for the glory of God, when the world
is made to know, 1. That God punishes sin even in his own people, because he hates it most in those
that are nearest and dearest to him, Amos iii. It is the praise of justice, that it be inflicted on the
wicked when God has judged his people for a prey, it is to correct them and reform them, not to gratify
their enemies, Isa. x. 7.—xii. 24. Let not them therefore exalt themselves. 3. That no sooner do God's
people humbly themselves under the rod, than he returns in mercy upon them.

11. God will give his own people to know what great favour he has in store for them, notwithstanding
the troubles he has brought them into; (v. 25, 26.) Now will I bring again the captivity of Jacob.

1. Why now? Now God will have mercy upon the whole house of Israel; (1.) Because it is time for
him to stand up for his own glory, which suffers in their sufferings; (Now will I be jealous for my holy
name, that may no longer be reproached. (2.) Because they now repent of their sins; They

have borne their shame, and all their trespasses; when sinners repent, and take shame to themselves,
God will have mercy on them, and deliver them. It is particularly pleasing to God, that these peni-
tents take a great way back in their penitential re-

flections, and are ashamed of all their trespasses which they were guilty of, when they dwelt safely
in their land, and none made them afraid. The remembrance of the mercies they enjoyed in their
own land, and the divine protection they were under ther efore, the detection of the iniquity of their de-
sins they committed in that land; they dwelt safely, and might have continued to dwell so, and none
should have given them any dishonour or disturbances, if they had continued in the way of their duty.
And, therefore they trespassed, because they dwelt safely; outward safety is often a cause of inward
ility, and that is an inlet to all sin, Ps. lxixii.

Now this they are willing to bear the shame of, and acknowledge that God has justly brought them
into a land of trouble, where every one makes them afraid, because they had trespassed against him in
a land of peace, where none made them afraid. And when they thus humble themselves under
humbling provindaces, God will bring again their captivity: and,

2. What then? When God has gathered them out of their enemies' hands, and brought them home
again;

(1.) Then God will have the praise of it; I will be sanctified in them in the sight of many nations, v.
27. As God was reproached in the reproach they were under during their captivity, so he will be
sanctified in their reformation, and the making of them a holy people again, and will be glorified in
their restoration, and the making of them a happy glorious people again.

(2.) Then they shall have the benefit of it; (v. 28.) They shall know that I Am the Lord God. Note,
The providences of God concerning his people, that are designed for their good, have the grace
of God going along with them, to teach them to eye God as the Lord, and their God, in all; and then
they do them good. They shall see him as the Lord and their God. (1.) In their calamities, that
it was he who caused them to be led into captivity;

and therefore they must not only submit to his will, but endeavour to answer his end in it. (2.) In
their comfort, that it is he who has gathered them to their

own land, and left none of them among the heathen.

Note, By the variety of events that befal us, if we lock up to God in all, we may come to acquaint
ourselves better with his attributes and design.

(3.) Then God and they will never part, v. 29.

[1.] God will pour out his Spirit upon them, to pre-

vent their departures from him, and returns to folly
again, and to keep them close to their duty. And then,
[2.] He will never hide his face any more from them, will never suspend his favour as he had
done: he will never turn from doing them good, and,
order them to do good, which he will ever do, shall never turn from doing him service. Note,
The indwelling of the Spirit is an infallible pledge of
the continuance of God's favour. He will hide
his face no more from those on whom he has poured
out his Spirit. When therefore we pray that God
would never cast us away from his presence, we
must as earnestly pray that, in order to that, he
would never take his Holy Spirit away from us,
Ps. l. 11.

CHAP. XL.

The waters of the sanctuary which this prophet saw in
vision, (ch. xliii.) are a representation of this
prophet. Hilberto, the waters have been sometimes
but to the ankles, in other places to the knees, or to the
joints, but now the waters are risen and are become a
river which cannot be passed over. Here is one con
I. In the fifth and twelfth year of our captivity, in the beginning of the year, in the tenth day of the month, in the fourteenth year after that the city was smitten, in the self-same day the hand of the Lord was upon me, and brought me thither. 

2. In the visions of God brought he me into the land of Israel, and set me upon a very high mountain, by which was as the frame of a city on the south. 

3. And he brought me thither; and, behold, there was a man, whose appearance was like the appearance of brass, with a line of flux in his hand, and a measuring-reed; and he stood in the gate. 

4. And the man said unto me, Son of man, behold with thine eyes, and hear with thine ears, and set thy heart upon all that I shall shew thee; for to the intent that I might shew unto thee art thou brought; betherefore, declare all that thou seest to the house of Israel. 

Here is, 1. The date of this vision. It was in the 28th year of Ezekiel's captivity, (v. 1.) which some compute to be the 53rd year of the first captivity, and is here said to be the 14th year after the city was smitten. See how conveniently the clearest and fullest prospects of their deliverance were given, then when they were in the depth of their distress, and an assurance of the return of the morning, when God would be with them; "Then the hand of the Lord was upon me, and brought me thither to Jerusalem, now that it was in ruins, despolate and desolated" —a aptible sight to the prophet. 

2. The place where it was had. The prophet was brought, in the visions of God, to the land of Israel, (v. 2.) And it was not the first time that he had been brought thither in vision; we had him carried to Jerusalem, to see it in its iniquity and shame; (ch. viii. 3.) here he is harked thither, to have a pleasing prospect of it in its glory, though its present aspect, now that it was quite depopulated, was dismal. He was set upon a very high mountain, as Moses upon the top of Pisgah, to view this land, which was now a second time made despised and despised in person. From the top of this mountain he saw as the frame of a city, the plan and model of it; but this city was temple as large as a city. The new Jerusalem (Rev. xxi. 22.) had no temple therein; this here is all temple, which comes much to one. It is a city for men to dwell in; it is a temple for God to dwell in; for in the church on earth God dwells with men, in that in heart in fashion as a man, and that is as much as to say, that he first and last made and build the temple. He brought him to this city, for it is through Christ that we have both acquaintance with, and access to the benefits and privileges of God's house. He it is that shall build the temple of the Lord, Zech. vi. 13. His appearing like brass indicates both his brightness and his strength. John, in vision, saw his feet like unto fine brass, Rev. x. 17.

3. The particular discoveries of this city (which he had at first a general view of) were made to him by a man whose appearance was like the appearance of brass, (v. 3.) not a created angel, but Jesus Christ, who should be found in fashion as a man, that he might first and last make and build the temple. He brought him to this city, for it is through Christ that we have both acquaintance with, and access to the benefits and privileges of God's house. He it is that shall build the temple of the Lord, Zech. vi. 13. His appearing like brass indicates both his brightness and his strength. John, in vision, saw his feet like unto fine brass, Rev. x. 17.

4. The dimensions of this city, or temple, and the several parts of it, were taken with a line of flux,
and a measuring-reed, or rod; (v. 3.) as carpenters have both their line and a wooden measure. The temple of God is built by line and rule; and those that would let others into the knowledge of it, must do it by that line and rule. The church is formed according to the scripture; the pattern in the mount. That is the line and the measuring-reed that is in the hand of Christ; with that doctrine and laws ought to be measured, and examined by that; for then peace is upon the Israel of God, when they walk according to that rule.

5. Directions are here given to the prophet to receive this revelation from the Lord, and transmit it pure and entire to the church, v. 4. (1.) He must carefully observe every thing that was said and done in this vision. His attention is raised and engaged, (v. 4.) "Behold with thine eyes all that is showed thee; do not only see it, but look intently upon it; and hear with thine ears all that is said to thee, diligently hearken to it, and be sure to set thine heart upon it; attend with a fixedness of thought, and a close application of mind." What we see of the works of God, and what we hear of the word of God, will do us no good, unless we set our hearts upon them, and thereby be fully apprised of it himself, and much affected with it. Note, They who are to preach God’s word to others, ought to study it well themselves, and set their hearts upon it. Now the reason given why he must both observe it himself and declare it to the house of Israel, is, because to this intent he is brought thither, and has it showed him. Note, When the things of God are showed us, it concerns us to consider to what intent they are showed us; and when we are sitting under the ministry of the word, to consider to what intent we are brought thither, that we may answer the end of our coming, and may not receive the grace of God, in showing us such things, in vain.

5. And, behold, a wall on the outside of the house round about, and in the man’s hand a measuring-reed of six cubits long, by the cubit; and a hand-breath: so he measured the breadth of the building one reed, and the height one reed. 6. Then came he unto the gate which looketh toward the east, and went up upon the stairs thereof, and measured the threshold of the gate, which was one reed broad, and the other threshold of the gate, which was one reed broad. 7. And every little chamber was one reed long, and one reed broad; and between the little chambers were five cubits; and the threshold of the gate, by the porch of the gate within, was one reed. 8. He measured also the porch of the gate within, one reed. 9. Then measured he the porch of the gate, eight cubits; and the posts thereof, two cubits; and the porch of the gate was inward. 10. And the little chambers of the gate eastward were three on this side, and three on that side; they three were of one measure; and the posts had one measure on this side and on that side. 11. And he measured the breadth of the entry of the gate, ten cubits and the length of the gate, thirteen cubits. 12. The space also before the little chambers was one cubit on this side, and the space was one cubit on that side; and the little chambers were six cubits on this side, and six cubits on that side. 13. He measured then the gate from the roof of one little chamber to the roof of another; the breadth was five and twenty cubits, door against door. 14. He made also posts of threescore cubits, even unto the post of the court round about the gate. 15. And from the face of the gate of the entrance, unto the face of the porch of the inner gate, were fifty cubits. 16. And there were narrow windows to the little chambers, and to their posts within the gate round about, and likewise to the arches; and windows were round about inward: and upon each post were palm-trees. 17. Then brought he me into the outward court, and, lo, there were chambers, and a pavement made for the court round about: thirty chambers were upon the pavement. 18. And the pavement by the side of the gates, over against the length of the gates, was the lower pavement. 19. Then he measured the breadth, from the fore-front of the lower gate unto the fore-front of the inner court without, a hundred cubits eastward and northward. 20. And the gate of the outward court, that looked toward the north, he measured the length thereof, and the breadth thereof. 21. And the little chambers thereof were three on this side, and three on that side; and the posts thereof, and the arches thereof, were after the measure of the first gate: the length thereof was fifty cubits, and the breadth five and twenty cubits. 22. And their windows, and their arches, and their palm-trees, were after the measure of the gate that looketh toward the east; and they went up unto it by seven steps; and the arches thereof were before them. 23. And the gate of the inner court was over against the gate toward the north, and toward the east; and he measured from gate to gate a hundred cubits. 24. After that he brought me toward the south, and, behold, a gate toward the south: and he measured the posts thereof, and the arches thereof, according to these measures. 25. And there were windows in it, and in the arches thereof round about, like those windows: the length was fifty cubits, and the breadth five and twenty cubits. 26. And there were seven steps: to go up to it, and the arches thereof were before them: and it had palm-trees, one on
this side, and another on that side, upon the posts thereof.

The measuring-reed which was in the hand of the surveyor-general, was mentioned before, v. 3. Here we are told, (v. 5.) what was the exact length of it, which must be observed, because the house was afterwards to be built by it. And it became a reckoning, not by the common cubit, but the cubit of the sanctuary, the sacred cubit, by which it was fit that this holy house should be measured, and that was a hand-breath, four inches, longer than the common cubit. The common cubit was eighteen inches, this twenty-two, see ch. xliii. 13. yet some of the critics contend, that this measuring-reed was but six common cubits in length, and some hand-breath added to the whole. The former seems more probable.

Here is an account.

I. Of the outer wall of the house, which compassed it round, which was three yards thick, and three yards high, which denotes the separation between the church and the world on every side; and the divine protection which the church is under. If a wall be this strong and thick will not secure it, God himself will be a Wall of fire round about it; whoever attack it, it is at their peril.

II. Of the several gates with the chambers adjoining to them. Here is no mention of the outer court of all, which was called the court of the Gentiles; some think, because in gospel-times there should be such a vast confluence of Gentiles to the church, that their court should be left unmeasured, to signify that the worshippers in that court should be unnumbered, Rev. vii. 9, 11, 12.

1. He begins with the east gate, because that was the usual way of entering into the lower end of the temple; the holy of holies being at the west end, in opposition to the idolatrous heathen that worshipped toward the east. Now, in the account of this gate, observe—

(1.) That he went up to it by stairs, (v. 6.) for the gospel-church was exalted above that of the Old Testament, and when we go to worship God, we must ascend; so is the call, Rev. iv. 1. Come up hither; Sursum corda—Up with your hearts.

(2.) That the chambers, adjoining to the gates were but little chambers, about ten feet square, v. 7. These were for those to lodge in, who attended the service of the house. And it becomes such as are made spiritual priests to God, to content themselves with little chambers, and not to seek great things to themselves; so that we may but have a place within the verge of God’s court, we have reason to be thankful though it be in a little chamber, a mean apartment, though we be but door-keepers there.

(3.) The chambers, as they were each of them four-square, denoting their stability and due proportion, and their exact agreement with the rule, (for they were each of them one reed long, and one reed broad,) so they were all of one measure, that there might be an equality among the attendants on the service of the house.

(4.) The chambers were very many; for in our Father’s house there are many mansions, John xiv. 2. In his house above, and in that here on earth. In the secret of his tabernacle shall those be hid, and in a safe pavilion, whose desire is to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of their life, Ps. xxvii. 4, 5. Some make these chambers to represent the particular congregations of believers, which are parts of the great temple, the universal church, which are armed and must be armed by the scripture- line and rule; and which Jesu Christ takes the measure of, that is, takes cognizance of, for he walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.

(3.) It is said, (v. 14.) He made also the posts. He that now measured them was the same that made them; for Christ is the Builder of his church, and therefore is best able to give us the knowledge of it. And his reducing them to the rule and standard is called his making of them, for no account is made of them further than they agree with that; To the line, and to the testimony.

(6.) Here are posts of sixty cubits, which, some think, was the full fillment when Cyrus, in his edict for rebuilding the temple at Jerusalem, ordered that the height thereof should be sixty cubits, that is, thirty yards, and more, Ezra vi. 3.

(7.) Here were windows to the little chambers, and windows to the posts and arches, to the cloisters below, and windows round about, (v. 16.) to signify the light from heaven, with which the church is illuminated; and the direction of the light, as instruction, direction, and comfort to those that dwell in God’s house; light to work by, light to walk by, light to see themselves and one another by.

There were lights to the little chambers; even the least, and least considerable parts and members of the church, shall have light afforded them. All thy children shall be taught of the Lord. But they are not in such numbers and vast presence, as the temple of Kings iv. 4. The discoveries made to the church of old are but narrow and scanty, compared with what shall be in the future state, when we shall no longer see through a glass darkly.

(8.) Divers courts are here spoken of; an outermost of all, then an outer court, then an inner, and then the innermost of all, into which the priests only were admitted; we may construe this to mean, “of the diversities of gifts, and graces, and offices, in the several members of Christ’s mystical body here; as also of the several degrees of glory in the courts and mansions of heaven; as there are stars in several spheres, and stars of several magnitudes, in the fixed firmament.”—English Annotations.

Some draw nearer to God than others, and have a more intimate acquaintance with divine things; but to a child of God a day in any of his courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. These courts had porches, or piazzas, round them, for the shelter of those that attended in them, from wind and weather; for when we are in the way of our duty to God, we may believe ourselves to be under his special protection, that he will graciously provide for us, may, that he will himself be a Covert from the storm and tempest. Isa. xl. 2.

(9.) On the posts were palm-trees engraven, (v. 16.) to signify that the righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree, in the courts of God’s house, Ps. cxii. 12. The more they are deprest with the burthen of affliction, the more strongly do they grow, as they say of the palm-trees. It likewise intimates the saints’ victory and triumph over their spiritual enemies; they have palms in their hands; (Rev. vii. 9.) but lest they should drop these, or have them snatched out of their hands, they are here engraven upon the posts of the temple as perpetual monuments of their honour; Thanks be to God who always causes us to triumph. Nay, believers shall themselves be made pillars in the temple of our God, and shall go no more out, and shall have his name engraven on them to be their brightest ornament and honour, Rev. iii. 12.

(10.) Notice is here taken of the pavement of the court, v. 17, 18. The word intimates that the pavement was made of porphyry-stone, which was of the colour of burning coals; the brightest and most sparkling glories of this world should be put and kept under our feet when we draw near to God, and are so much more precious than they were as it were, the burning coals, or stones of a fiery colour, with which the pavement of God’s celestial temple is laid; and if the pavement of the court be
so bright and glittering, how glorious must we conclude the mansions of that house to be! 2. The gates that looked toward the north, (v. 20.) and toward the south, (v. 24.) with their appendances, are much the same with that toward the east, after the measure of the first gate, v. 21. But the description is repeated very particularly. And thus largely was the structure of the tabernacle related in Exodus, and of the temple in the books of Kings and Chronicles, to signify the special notice God does take, and his ministers should take, of all that belong to his church; his delight is in them, his eye is upon them. He knows all that are his, all his living temples, and all that belongs to them. Observe, (1.) This temple had not only a gate toward the east, to let into it the children of the east, that were famous for their wealth and wisdom; but it had a gate to the north, and another to the south, for the admission of the poor and less civilized nations. The new Jerusalem has twelve gates, three towards each quarter of the world; (Rev. xxii. 13.) for many shall come from all parts, to sit down there, Matth. viii. 11. (2.) To those gates they went up by steps, seven steps, (v. 22–26.) which, as some observe, may remind us of the necessity of advancing in grace and holiness, adding one grace to another; going from step to step, from strength to strength, still pressing forward toward perfection; upward, upward, toward heaven, the temple above.

27. And there was a gate in the inner court toward the south: and he measured from gate to gate toward the south a hundred cubits. 28. And he brought me to the inner court by the south gate: and he measured the south gate according to these measures; 29. And the little chambers thereof, and the posts thereof, and the arches thereof, according to these measures: and there were windows in it, and in the arches thereof round about: it was fifty cubits long, and five and twenty cubits broad. 30. And the arches round about were five and twenty cubits long, and five cubits broad: 31. And the arches thereof were toward the outer court; and palm-trees were upon the posts thereof: and the going up to it had eight steps. 32. And he brought me into the inner court toward the east: and he measured the gate according to these measures. 33. And the little chambers thereof, and the posts thereof, and the arches thereof, were according to these measures: and there were windows therein, and in the arches thereof round about: it was fifty cubits long, and five and twenty cubits broad. 34. And the arches thereof were toward the outward court; and palm-trees were upon the posts thereof, and on this side and on that side: and the going up to it had eight steps. 35. And he brought me to the north gate, and measured it according to these measures: 36. The little chambers thereof, the posts thereof, and the arches thereof, and the windows to it round about: the length was fifty cubits, and the breadth five and twenty cubits. 37. And the posts thereof were toward the outer court; and palm-trees were upon the posts thereof, on this side, and on that side: and the going up to it had eight steps. 38. And the chambers, and the entries thereof, were by the posts of the gates, where they washed the burnt-offering.

In these verses, we have a delineation of the inner court; The survey of the outer court ended with the south side of it. This of the inner court begins with the south side, (v. 27.) proceeds to the east, (v. 32.) and so to the north; (v. 33.) for here is no gate either of the outer or inner court toward the west; it should seem that in Solomon's temple there were gates westward, for we find porters toward the west, 1 Chron. iv. 24.—xxvi. 18. But Josephus says, that in the second temple there was no gate on the west side. Observe, 1. These gates into the inner court were exactly uniform with those into the outer court; the dimensions the same, the chambers adjoining the same, the galleries or rows round the court the same, the arches and archways; an exact resemblance of grace, and its workings, are the same, for substance, in grown Christians that are in young beginners, only that the former are got so much nearer their perfection. The faith of all the saints is alike precious, though it be not alike strong. There is a great resemblance between one child of God and another; for all they are brethren, and bear the same image. 2. The ascent into the outer court at each gate was by seven steps, but the ascent into the inner court at each gate was by eight steps. This is expressly taken notice of, (v. 31, 34, 37.) to signify that the nearer we approach to God, the more we should rise above this world and the things of it. The people, who worshipped in the outer court, must rise seven steps above other people, but the priests, who attended in the inner court, must rise eight steps above them; must exceed them at least one step more than they exceed other people.

39. And in the porch of the gate were two tables on this side, and two tables on that side, to slay thereon the burnt-offering, and the sin-offering, and the trespass-offering. 40. And at the side without, as one goeth up to the entry of the north gate, were two tables; and on the other side, which was at the porch of the gate, were two tables. 41. Four tables were on this side, and four tables on that side, by the side of the gate; eight tables, wherupon they slew their sacrifices. 42. And the four tables were of hewn stone for the burnt-offering, of a cubit and a half long, and a cubit and a half broad, and one cubit high: whereupon also they laid the instruments whereby they slew the burnt-offering and the sacrifice. 43. And within were hooks, a hand broad, fastened round about: and upon the tables was the flesh of the offering. 44. And without the inner gate were the chambers of the singers in the inner court, which was at the side of the north gate; and their prospect
was toward the south; one at the side of the east gate, having the prospect toward the north. 45. And he said unto me, This chamber, whose prospect is toward the south, is for the priests, the keepers of the charge of the house. 46. And the chamber whose prospect is toward the north is for the priests, the keepers of the charge of the altar: these are the sons of Zadok, among the sons of Levi, which come near to the Lord to minister unto him. 47. So he measured the court, a hundred cubits long, and a hundred cubits broad, four square, and the altar that was before the house. 48. And he brought me to the porch of the house, and measured each post of the porch, five cubits on this side, and five cubits on that side: and the breadth of the gate was three cubits on this side, and three cubits on that side. 49. The length of the porch was twenty cubits, and the breadth eleven cubits; and he brought me by the steps whereby they went up to it; and there were pillars by the posts, one on this side, and another on that side.

In these verses we have an account,

1. Of the tables that were in the porch of the gates of the inner court. We find no description of the altars of burnt-offerings in the midst of that court, till ch. xxviii. 13. But because the one altar under the law was to be exchanged for a multitude of tables under the gospel, here is early notice taken of the tables, at our entrance into the inner court, till we come to partake of the table of the Lord, we are but professors at large; our admission to that is our entrance into the inner court. But in this gospel-temple we meet with no altar, till after the glory of the Lord has taken possession of it, for Christ is our Altar, that sanctifies every gift. Here were eight tables provided, wherein to set the burnt-offerings, and for the use of priests for this purpose, either in the tabernacle, or in Solomon's temple. But here they are provided, to intimate the multitude of spiritual sacrifices that should be brought to God's house in gospel-times, and the multitude of hands that should be employed in offering up these sacrifices. Here were the shewbreads for the altar; here were the vessels on which they did the flesh of the sacrifice, the knives with which they cut it up, and the hooks on which they hung it up, that it might be ready to be offered on the altar. 43.) and there also they washed the burnt-offerings, (v. 38.) to intimate that before we draw near to God's altar, we must have every thing in readiness; must wash our hands, our hearts, those spiritual sacrifices we offer up. 5. The use that some of the chambers mentioned before, were put to. (1.) Some were for the singers, v. 44. It should seem, they were first provided for before any other that attended this temple-service, to intimate, not only that singing of psalms should still continue a gospel-ordinance, but that the gospel should furnish all that embrace it with abundant matter for joy and peace, and give them occasion to break forth into singing, which is often foretold concerning gospel-times, Ps. cvi. 1.—cviii. 1. Christians should be singers. Blessed are they that dwell in God's house, they will be still praising him. (2.) Others of them were for the priests; both those that kept the charge of the house, to cleanse it, and to see that none came into it to pollute it, and to keep it in good repair, (v. 45.) and those that kept the charge of the charge of the altar. (v. 46.) The Lord to minister to him. God will find convenient lodging for all his servants. Those that do the work of his house, shall enjoy the comforts of it.

3. Of the inner court; the court of the priests, which was fifty yards square, v. 47. The altar that was before the house, was placed in the midst of this court, over against the three gates, and having the line with the altar of the outer court, when the gates were set open, all the people in the outer court might through them be spectators of the service done at the altar. Christ is both our Altar and our Sacrifice, to whom we must look with an eye of faith in all our approaches to God, and he is Salvation in the midst of the earth, (Ps. lxxi. 12.) to be looked unto from all quarters.

1. Of the porch of the house. The temple is called the house, emphatically, as if no other house were worthy to be called so. Before this house there was a porch, to teach us not to rush hastily and inconsiderately into the presence of God, but gradually, that is, gravely, and with solemnity, passing first through the outer court, then the inner, then we go into the house, so between this porch and the altar was a place where the priests used to pray, Joel ii. 17. In the porch, beside the posts on which the doors were hung, there were pillars, probably for state and ornament, like Jachin and Boaz; He will establish; in him is strength, v. 49. In the gospel-church, every thing is strong and firm, and every thing ought to be kept in its place, and to be done decently and in order.

CHAP. XL.

An account was given of the porch of the house, in the close of the foregoing chapter, this brings us to the temple itself; the description of which here gives much difficulty to the critical expositors, and occasions differences among them. Those must consult them, who are nice in their inquiries into the meaning of the particulars of this delineation; It shall suffice us to observe—1. The dimensions of the house, the posts of it, (v. 4.) the door, (v. 6.) the wall and the side-chambers, (v. 5, 6.) the foundations and wall of the chambers, their doors, (v. 8. v. 11.) and the house itself, v. 13. 11. The dimensions of the oracle, or most holy place, v. 3, 4. 11. An account of the upper doors between the holy and the most holy place, v. 12., 15. 4. The manner of the building of the house, v. 7, 16, 17. V. The ornaments of the house, v. 18, 20. VI. The altar of incense, and the table, v. 29, 30. The door between the holy and the temple, v. 32, 36. There is so much difference both in the terms and in the rules of architecture between one age and another, one place and another, that it ought not to be any stumbling-block to us, that there is much in these descriptions dark, and hard to be understood, about the meaning of which the learned are not agreed. To one not skilful in mathematics, the mathematical description of a house would be unreadable; and yet to a common carpenter or mason among the Jews at that time, we may suppose that all this, in the literal sense of it, was easy enough.

1. AFTERWARD he brought me to the temple, and measured the posts, six cubits broad on the one side, and six cubits broad on the other side, which was the breadth of the tabernacle. 2. And the breadth of the door was ten cubits; and the sides of the door were five cubits on the one side, and five cubits on the other side; and he measured the length thereof, forty cubits, and the breadth, twenty cubits. 3. Then went he inward, and measured the post of
the door two cubits, and the door six cubits, and the breadth of the door seven cubits. 4. So he measured the length thereof, twenty cubits, and the breadth, twenty cubits, before the temple; and he said unto me, This is the most holy place. 5. After he measured the wall of the house six cubits; and the breadth of every side-chamber four cubits, round about the house on every side. 6. And the side-chambers were three, one over another, and thirty in order; and they entered into the wall, which was of the house for the side-chambers round about, that they might have hold, but they had not hold in the wall of the house. 7. And there was an enlarging and a winding about still upward to the side-chambers; for the winding about of the house went still upward round about the house: therefore the breadth of the house was still upward, and so increased from the lowest chamber to the highest by the midst. 8. I saw also the height of the house round about: the foundations of the side-chambers were a full reed of six great cubits. 9. The thickness of the wall, which was for the side-chamber without, was five cubits; and that which was left was the place of the side-chambers that were within. 10. And between the chambers was the wideness of twenty cubits round about the house on every side. 11. And the doors of the side-chambers were toward the place that was left, one door toward the north, and another door toward the south; and the breadth of the place that was left was five cubits round about.

We are still attending a prophet that is under the guidance of an angel, and therefore attend with reverence, though we are often at a loss to know both what this is, and what it is to us. Observe here,

1. After the prophet had observed the courts, he was at length brought to the temple; v. 1. If we diligently attend to the instructions given us in the plainer parts of religion, and profit by them, we shall be led further, into an acquaintance with the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. They that are willing to dwell in God's courts, shall at length be brought into his temple. Ezekiel was himself a priest, but by the iniquity and calamity of the times was cut short of his birthright-privilege, of ministering in the temple; but God makes up the loss to him, by introducing him into this prophetic, evangelical, contemplative, and employing him to transmit a description of it to the church, in which he was dignified above all the rest of his order.

2. When our Lord Jesus spake of the destroying of this temple, which his hearers understood of this second temple of Jerusalem, he spake of the temple of his body; (John ii. 19, 21.) and with good reason might he speak so ambiguously, when Ezekiel's vision had a joint respect to them both together, including also his mystical body the church, which is called the house of God, (1 Tim. iii. 15.) and all the members of that body, which are living temples, in whom the Spirit dwells.

3. The very posts of this temple, the door-posts, were as far one from the other, and, consequently, the door was as wide, as the whole breadth of the tabernacle of Moses, (v. 1.) Twelve cubits, Exod. xxvi. 16, 22, 25. In comparison with what had been under the law, we may say, Wide is the gate which leads into the church; the ceremonial law, that wall of partition which had so much straitened the gate, being taken down.

4. The most holy place was an exact square, twenty cubits each way, v. 4. For the New Jerusalem is exactly four-square, (Rev. xxxi. 16.) denoting its stability; for we look for a city that cannot be moved.

5. The upper stories were larger than the lower, v. 7. The walls of the temple were six cubits thick at the bottom, five in the middle story, and four in the highest, which gave room to enlarge the chambers the higher they went; but care was taken that the timber might have fast hold; though God builds high he builds firm; yet so as not to weaken one part for the strengthening of another; they had hold, but not in the wall of the house. By this spreading gradually, the side-chambers that were on the height of the house, in the uppermost story of all, were six cubits; whereas the lowest were but four; they gained a cubit every story. The higher we build up ourselves in our most holy faith, the more should our hearts, those living temples, be enlarged.

12. Now the building that was before the separate place, at the end toward the west, was seventy cubits broad; and the wall of the building was five cubits thick round about, and the length thereof ninety cubits. 13. So he measured the house, a hundred cubits long; and the separate place, and the building, with the walls thereof, a hundred cubits long; 14. Also the breadth of the face of the house, and of the separate place toward the east, a hundred cubits. 15. And he measured the length of the building over against the separate place which was behind it, and the galleries thereof on the one side, and on the other side, a hundred cubits, with the inner temple, and the porches of the court; 16. The door-posts, and the narrow windows, and the galleries round about on their three stories, over against the door, ceiled with wood round about, and from the ground up to the windows, and the windows were covered; 17. To that above the door, even unto the inner house and without, and by all the wall round about, within and without, by measure. 18. And it was made with cherubims and palm-trees, so that a palm-tree was between a cherub and a cherub; and every cherub had two faces; 19. So that the face of a man was toward the palm-tree on the one side, and the face of a young lion toward the palm-tree on the other side: it was made through all the house round about. 20. From the ground unto above the door were cherubims and palm-trees made, and on the wall of the temple. 21. The posts of the temple were squared, and the face of the sanctuary; the
appearance of the one as the appearance of the other. 22. The altar of wood was three cubits high, and the length thereof two cubits; and the corners thereof, and the length thereof, and the walls thereof, were of wood; and he said unto me, This is the table that is before the Lord. 23. And the temple and the sanctuary had two doors. 24. And the doors had two leaves apiece, two turning leaves; two leaves for the one door, and two leaves for the other door. 25. And there were made on them, on the doors of the temple, cherubims and palm-trees, like as were made upon the walls; and there were thick planks upon the face of the porch without. 26. And there were narrow windows and palm-trees on the one side and on the other side, on the sides of the porch, and upon the side-chambers of the house, and thick planks.

Here is, 1. An account of a building that was before the separate place, before the temple, at the end toward the west, (v. 12.) which is here measured, and compared, (v. 13.) with the measure of the house, and appears to be of equal dimensions with it. This stood in a court by itself, which is measured, v. 15. and its galleries, or chambers, belonging to it, its posts and windows, and the ornaments of them, v. 15.—17. But what use was to be made of this other building, we are not told; perhaps, in this vision, it signified the setting up a church among the Gentiles, not inferior to the Jewish temple, but of quite another nature, and which should soon supersede it. 2. A description of the ornaments of the temple, and the other building. The walls on the inside from top to bottom were adorned with cherubims and palm-trees, placed alternately as in Solomon's temple, 1 Kings vi. 29. Each cherub is here said to have two faces; the face of a man toward the palm-tree on one side, and the face of a young lion toward the palm-tree on the other side, v. 19. These seem to represent the angels, who have more than the wisdom of a man, and the courage of a lion; and in both they have an eye to the palms of victory and triumph, which are set before them, and which they are sure of in all their conflicts with the powers of darkness. And in the assemblies of the saints angels are in a special manner present, 1 Cor. xi. 10. 3. A description of the posts of the doors, both of the temple and of the sanctuary; they were squared, (v. 21.) not round like pillars; and the appearance of the one as the appearance of the other. In the tabernacle, and in Solomon's temple, the door of the sanctuary was made shorter than that of the temple; but here it was full as broad; for in gospel-times the way into the holiest of all is made more manifest than it had been under the Old Testament, (Heb. ix. 8.) and therefore the door is wider. These doors are described, v. 23. 24. The temple and the sanctuary had each of them their doors, and they were two-leaved, folding doors. 4. We have here the description of the altar of incense, here said to be an altar of wood, v. 22. No mention is made of its being overlaid with gold; but surely it was intended to be so, else it would not bear the fire with which the incense was to be burned; unless we will suppose that it served only to put the censers upon. Or else it intimates, that the incense to be offered in the gospel-temple shall be purely spiritual, and the fire spiritual, which will not consume an altar of wood. Therefore this altar is called a table; this is the table that is before the Lord. Here, as before, we find the altar turned into a table; for the great sacrifice being now offered, that which we have to do, is, to feast upon the sacrifice at the Lord's table. 5. Here is the adorning of the doors and windows with palm-trees, that they might be of a piece with the walls of the house, v. 25. 26. Thus the living temples are adorned, not with gold or silver, or costly array, but with the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible.

CHAP. XLII.

This chapter continues and concludes the describing and measuring of this mystical temple, which it is very hard to understand the particular architecture of, and yet more hard to comprehend the mystical meaning of. Here is, 1. A description of the chambers that were about the courts, their situation and structure, v. 1. 13. And the uses for which they were designed, v. 13. 14. II. A survey of the whole compass of ground, which was taken up with the house, and the courts belonging to it, v. 15.—20.

1. THEN he brought me forth into the outer court, the way toward the north, and he brought me into the chamber that was over against the separate place, and which was before the building toward the north. 2. Before the length of a hundred cubits was the north door, and the breadth was fifty cubits. 3. Over against the twenty cubits which were for the inner court, and over against the pavement which was for the outer court, was gallery against gallery in three stories. 4. And before the chambers was a walk of ten cubits breadth inward, a way of one cubit: and their doors toward the north. 5. Now, the upper chambers were shorter: for the galleries were higher than these, than the lower, and than the middlemost of the building. 6. For they were in three stories, but had no pillars as the pillars of the courts: therefore the building was straitened more than the lowest and the middlemost from the ground. 7. And the wall that was without over against the chambers, toward the outer court on the fore-part of the chambers, the length thereof was fifty cubits. 8. For the length of the chambers that were in the outer court was fifty cubits: and, lo, before the temple were a hundred cubits. 9. And from under these chambers was the entry on the east side, as one goeth into them from the outer court. 10. The chambers were in the thickness of the wall of the court toward the east, over against the separate place, and over against the building. 11. And the way before them was like the appearance of the chambers which were toward the north, as long as they, and as broad as they; and all their goings-out were both according to their fashions, and
according to their doors. 12. And according to the doors of the chambers that were toward the south was a door in the head of the way, even the way directly before the wall toward the east, as one entereth into them. 13. Then said he unto me, The north chambers and the south chambers, which are before the separate place, they be holy chambers, where the priests that approach unto the Lord shall eat the most holy things: there shall they lay the most holy things, and the meat-offering, and the sin-offering, and the trespass-offering; for the place is holy. 14. When the priests enter therein, then shall they not go out of the holy place into the outer court, but there they shall lay their garments wherein they minister; for they are holy; and shall put on other garments, and shall approach to those things which are for the people.

The prophet has taken a very exact view of the temple and the buildings belonging to it, and is now brought again into the outer court, to observe the chambers that were in that square.

1. Here is a description of these chambers; which (as that which went before) seems to us very per-plexed and intricate, through our unacquaintedness with the Hebrew language, and the rules of architecture at that time. We shall only observe, in general,

1. That about the temple, which was the place of public worship, there were private chambers, to teach us that our attendance upon God in solemn ordinances will not excuse us from the duties of the closet. We must not only worship in the courts of God’s house, but must, both before and after our attendance there, enter into our chambers, enter into our closets, and read and meditate, and pray to our Father in secret; and a great deal of comfort the people of God have found in their communion with God in solitude.

2. That these chambers were many; there were three stories of them, and though the higher stories were not so large as the lower, yet they served as well for retirement, v. 5, 6. There were many, that there might be conveniences for all such devout people as Anna the prophetess, who departed not from the temple night or day, Luke ii. 37. In my Father’s house are many mansions; in his house on earth there are so; multitudes by faith have taken lodgings in his sanctuary, and yet there is room.

3. That these chambers, though they were private, yet were near the temple, within view of it, within reach of it, to teach us to prefer public worship before private—(The Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob, and so must we,) and to refer our private worship to the public. Our religious performances in our chambers must be to prepare us for the exercises of devotion in public, and to further us in our improvement of them as our opportunities are.

4. That before these chambers there were walks of five yards broad, (v. 4.) in which those that had odgings in these chambers might meet for conversation. They might walk and talk together for their mutual edification, might communicate their knowledge and experiences. For we are not to spend all our time between the church and the chamber, though a great deal of time may be spent to very good purpose in both; but man is made for society, and Christians for the communion of saints; and the duties of that communion we must make conscience of, and the privileges and pleasures of that communion we must take the comfort of. It is promised to Joshua, who was High Priest in the second temple, that God will give him places to walk in among them that stand by, Zech. iii. 7.

11. Here is the use of these chambers appointed, v. 13, 14.

1. They were for the priests, that approach unto the Lord, that they may be always near their business, and may not be non-residents; therefore they are called holy chambers, because they were for the use of them that ministered in holy things, during their ministration. Those that have public work to do for God and the souls of his people, must know much in private, to fit themselves for it. Ministers should spend much time in their chambers, in reading, meditation, and prayer, that their professing may appear; and they ought to be provided with conveniences for this purpose.

2. There the priests were to deposit the most holy things, those parts of the offerings which fell to their share; and there they were to eat them, and their families, in a religious manner; for the place is holy; and thus they must make a difference between those feasts upon the sacrifice and other meals.

3. There (among other uses) they were to lay their vestments, which God had appointed them to wear when they ministered at the altar; their linen caps, coat-linens, and priestly garments. We read of the providing of priests’ garments after their return out of captivity, Neh. vii. 70, 72. When they had ended their service at the altar, they must lay by those garments, to signify that the use of them should continue only during that dispensation; but they must put on other garments, such as other people wear, when they approached to these things which were for the people, to do that part of their service which related to the people, to teach them the law and to answer their inquiries. Their holy garments must be laid up, that they may be kept clean and decent for the credit of their service.

15. Now, when he had made an end of measuring the inner house, he brought me forth toward the gate whose prospect is toward the east, and measured it round about.

16. He measured the east side with the measuring-reed, five hundred reeds, with the measuring-reed round about. 17. He measured the north side, five hundred reeds, with the measuring-reed round about. 18. He measured the south side five hundred reeds, with the measuring-reed. 19. He turned about to the west side, and measured five hundred reeds, with the measuring-reed. 20. He measured it by the four sides: it had a wall round about, five hundred reeds long, and five hundred broad, to make a separation between the sanctuary and the profane place.

We have attended the measuring of this mystical temple, and are now to see how far the holy ground on which we tread extends; and that also is here measured, and found to take in a great compass. Observe,

1. What the dimensions of it were. It extended each way five hundred reeds, (v. 16—19.) each reed above three yards and a half, so that it reached every way about an English measured mile, which, the ground
lying square, was above four miles round. Thus large were the suburbs, (as I may call them) of this mystical temple; signifying the great extent of the Church in gospel-times, when all nations should be disciples, and the kingdom of the world made Christ's kingdoms. Room should be made in God's courts for the numerous forces of the Gentiles that shall flow into them, as was foretold, Isa. xxvi. 18., x. 4. It is in part fulfilled already in the accession of the Gentiles to the church; and we trust it shall have a more full accomplishment, when the fulness of the Gentiles shall come in, and all Israel shall be saved, Rom. xi. 26., xii. 17.

2. Why the dimensions of it were made thus large. It was to make a separation, by putting a very large distance between the sanctuary and the profane place; and therefore there was a wall surrounding it, to keep off those that were uncleane, and to separate between the precious and the vile. Note, A difference is to be put between common and sacred things, between God's name and other names, between his day and other days, his book and other books, his institutions and other observances; and a distance to be put between our worldly and religious actions, so as still to go about the worship of God with a solemn pause.

CHAP. XLIII.

The prophet having given us a view of the mystical temple, he more particularly下降 and leads us into the sanctuary of the Lord; for it might appear not to be erected in vain, comes to describe, in this and the next chapter, the worship that should be performed in it, but under the type of the Old Testament services. In these chapters, we have, I. The session taken of this temple, by the glory of God filling it, v. 1., 6. 11. A promise given of the continuance of God's presence with his people, upon condition of their return to, and continuance in, the instituted way of his worship, and their abandoning of idols and idolatry, v. 7., 12. III. A description of the altar of burnt-offerings, v. 13., 17. IV. Directions given for the consecration of that altar, v. 18. 27. Ezekiel seems here to stand between God and Israel, as Moses the servant of the Lord did, when the sanctuary was first set up.

1. AFTERWARD he brought me to the gate, even the gate that looketh toward the east: 2. And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east; and his voice was like a noise of many waters: and the earth shined with his glory. 3. And it was according to the appearance of the vision which I saw, even according to the vision that I saw when I came to destroy the city; and the visions were like the vision that I saw by the river Chebar; and I fell upon my face. 4. And the glory of the Lord came into the house, by the way of the gate whose prospect is toward the east. 5. So the spirit took me up, and brought me into the inner court; and, behold, the glory of the Lord filled the house. 6. And I heard him speaking unto me out of the house; and the man stood by me.

After Ezekiel had patiently surveyed the temple of God, the greatest glory of this earth, he is admitted to a higher form, and honoured with a sight of the glories of the upper world; it is said to him, Come up hither. He has seen the temple, and sees it to be very spacious and splendid; but till the glory of God comes into it, it is but like the dead body in which he had seen vision, (ch. xxxvii.) that had no breath, till the Spirit of life entered into them. Here therefore he sees the house filled with God's glory.

1. He has a vision of the glory of God, (v. 2.) the glory of the God of Israel, that God who is in Christ Jesus the Head of the body, the Church, and worship. The idols of the heathen have no glory but what they owe to the goldsmith or the painter; but this is the glory of the God of Israel! This glory came from the way of the east, and therefore he was brought to the gate that leads toward the east, to expect the appearance and approach of it. Christ's star was seen in the east, and he is that other章程 of the morning star. For he is the Morning Star, he is the Sun of Righteousness. Two things he observed in this appearance of the glory of God. (1.) The power of his word which he heard; His voice was like a noise of many waters, which is heard very far, and makes impressions; the noise of pouring streams is glorious, of a roaring sea dreadful, Rev. i. 15. — (2.) The brightness of his appearance which he saw; The earth shined with his glory; for God is Light, and none can bear the lustre of his light, none has seen or can see it. 

Note, That glory of God which shines in the church, shall be such a glory as the world hereafter appeared for David, the brightness that was before him dispersed the clouds, Ps. lxxxvii. 12. This appearance of the glory of God to Ezekiel here, he observed to be the same with the vision he saw, when he first received his commission, (ch. i.) according to that by the river Chebar, (v. 3.) because God is the same, he was pleased to manifest himself in the same manner, for with him is no variableness. "It was the same" (says he) "as that which I saw when I came to destroy the city, that is, to foretell the city's destruction"; which he did with such authority and efficacy, and the event did so certainly answer the prediction, that he might be said to destroy it. As a judge, in God's name, he passed a sentence upon it, which was soon executed. God appeared in the same manner when he sent him to speak words of terror, and when he sent him to speak words of comfort; for in both God is, and will be, glorified. He kills, and he makes alive; he wounds, and he heals, Deut. xxxii. 29. To the same hand that destroyed we must look for deliverance; he has smitten, and he will bind up. One commentator has very right in this, viz:—The same hand inflicted the wound, and healed it.

2. He has a vision of the entrance of this glory into the temple. When he saw this glory, he fell upon his face, (v. 3.) as not able to bear the lustre of God's glory, or, rather, as one willing to give him the glory of it by an humble and reverent adoration. But the spirit took him up, (v. 5.) when the glory of the Lord was come into the house, so that he might see how the house was filled with it. He saw how the glory of the Lord in this same appearance departed from the temple, because it was profaned, to his great grief; now he shall see it return to the temple to his great satisfaction. See ch. x. 18., 19. — xl. 23. Note, Though God may forsake his people for a small moment, he will return with a glory that no forsaking can take away, and he will fill the house as it had filled the tabernacle which Moses set up, and the temple of Solomon, Exod. xl. 34. 1 Kings xvi. 10. Now we do not find that ever the Shechinah did in that manner take possession of the second temple, and therefore this was to have its accomplishment in that glory of the divine grace which shines so bright in the gospel-church, and fills it. Here is no mention of a cloud filling the house as formerly, for we now with open face
EZEKIEL, XLIII.

behold the glory of the Lord, in the face of Christ, and not as of old through the cloud of types.

3. He receives instructions more immediately from the glory of the Lord; as Moses did when God had taken possession of the tabernacle; (Lev. i. 1.) I heard him speaking to me out of the house, v. 6. God's glory shining in the church, we must from thence expect to receive divine oracles. The man stood by me; we could not but hear the voice of God any more than to see the face of God, if it was as true as it stood by on Mediator. Or if this was a created angel, it is observable that when God began to speak to Ezekiel, he stood by, and gave way; having no more to say. Nay, he stood by the prophet, as a learner with him; for to the principalities and powers, to the angels themselves, who desire to look into these things, is known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, Eph. iii. 7. The man stood by him to conduct him thither where he might receive further discoveries, ch. xlv. 1.

7. And he said unto me, Son of man, the place of my throne, and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel for ever, and my holy name, shall the house of Israel no more defile, neither they, nor their kings, by their whoredom, nor by the carcases of their kings in their high places; 3. In their setting of their thresholds by my thresholds, and their post by my posts, and the wall between me and them; they have even defiled my holy name by their abominations that they have committed: wherefore I have consumed them in mine anger. 9. Now let them put away their whoredom, and the carcases of their kings, far from me, and I will dwell in the midst of them for ever. 10. Thou son of man, shew the house to the house of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities; and let them measure the pattern. 11. And if they be ashamed of all that they have done, shew them the form of the house, and the fashion thereof, and the going-out thereof, and the comings-in thereof, and all the forms thereof, and all the ordinances thereof; and all the forms thereof, and all the laws thereof: and write it in their sight, that they may keep the whole form thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and do them. 12. This is the law of the house; Upon the top of the mountain, the whole limit thereof round about shall be most holy. Behold, this is the law of the house.

God does here, in effect, renew his covenant with his people Israel, upon his retaking possession of the house, and Ezekiel negotiates the matter, as Moses formerly. This would be of great use to the captives at their return, both for direction and encouragement; but it looks further, to those that are blessed with the privileges of the gospel-temple, that they may understand how they are before him on their good behaviour.

12. God, by the prophet, puts them in mind of their former provocations, for which they had long lain under the tokens of his displeasure. This con- viction is spoken to them, to make way for the com- fort designed and the promises promised; whor- ebroads not, it becomes us, when he forgives, to upbraid ourselves with our unworthy conduct toward him. Let them now remember therefore,

(1.) That they had formerly defiled God's holy name, had profaned and abused all those sacred things by which he had made himself known among them, v. 7. They and their kings had brought con- straint and their abominations to the pollution to God, by their spiritual whoredom, their idolatry, and by worshipping images, which they called their kings, so for Molech signifies; or lords, for so Baal signifies; but which were really the carcases of kings, not only lifeless and useless, but loathsome and abominable as dead carcases, in their high places, set up in honour of them. They had defiled their name, and what were they? It was in setting their threshold by my thresholds, and their post by my posts, adding their own inventions to God's institutions, and urging all to a compliance with them, as if they had been of equal authority and efficacy; teaching for doctrines the commandments of men; (Isa. xxxix. 13) or, rather, setting up altars to their own gods, and courts of justice, and cities, which a more impudent afront could not be put upon the Divine Majesty. Thus they set up a separation wall between him and them, which stopped the current of his favours to them, and spoiled the acceptableness of their services to him. See what an indignity sinners do to God, setting up their wills in opposition to his, and trusting him out from what is his right; and see what injury they do to themselves for the nearer any come to God with their sins, the further they set him at a distance from them. Some give this sense of it; Though their houses joined close to God's house, their posts and thresholds to his, so that they were in a manner his next neighbours, there was but a wall between me and them, (so it is in the margin) so that it might have been expected they should have acquitted themselves with him, and been in care to please him, yet they were not so much as neighbourably. Note, It often proves too true, The nearer the church, the farther from God. They were by profession, in covenant with God, and yet they had defiled the place of his throne, and of the soles of his feet, his temple, where he did both reside and reign Jerusalem is called the city of the Great King, (Ps. cxlv.) and his potestate, Ps. xcviii. 3. Christ is called, Note, When God's ordinances are profaned, his holy name is polluted.

(2.) That, for this, God had a controversy with them in their late troubles. They could not condemn him, for he had but brought upon them the desert of their sins; Wherefore I have consumed them in mine anger. Note, Those that pollute God's holy name, shall not be unpunished. 2. He calls upon them to repent and reform, and, in order to that, to be ashamed of their iniquities; (v. 9.) "Now let them put away their whoredom; now that they have smoldered so severely for it, and now that God is returning in mercy to them, and setting up his sanctuary again in the midst of them, now let them cast away their idols, and have no more to do with them. They that are smitten with the privileges which they have been taught to know the worth of by the want of them. Let them put away their idols, those loathsome carcases of their kings, far from me; from being a provocation to me." This was reasonable counsel now that the prophet had the platform of the temple to set before them; for, (1.) If they see that platform, they will surely be ashamed of their idols; (v. 10,) when they see what mercy God has in store for them,
n, notwithstanding their utter unworthiness of it, they will be ashamed to think of their disingenuous conduct toward him. Note, The goodness of God to us should lead us to repentance, especially to a penitential shame. Let them measure the pattern themselves; and see how much it exceeds the former pattern, and guess by that what great things God has in store for them; and surely it will put them out of countenance to think what the desert of their sins was. And then, (2.) If they be ashamed of all that they have done, upon a general view of the goodness of God, let them have a more distinct, particular account of it. Note, Those that improve what they see and know of the goodness of God, shall see and know more of it in this, and not till then, we are qualified for God’s favours, when we are truly humbled for our own follies. ‘Show them the form of the house, let them see what a stately structure it will be, and withal show them the ordinances and laws of it.’ Note, With the foreseights of our comforts, it is fit that we should get the knowledge of our duty; with the privileges of God’s house we must be acquainted, and not till then, we shall know what we are qualified for his favours. 11. And the altar shall be four cubits, and the breadth one cubit. 12. So the altar shall be four cubits; and from the altar and upward shall be four horns. 16. And the altar shall be twelve cubits long, twelve broad, square in the four squares thereof. 17. And the settle shall be fourteen cubits long, and fourteen broad in the four squares thereof; and the border about it shall be half a cubit; and the bottom thereof shall be a cubit about; and his stairs shall look toward the east. 18. And he said unto me, Son of man, thus saith the Lord God, ‘These are the ordinances of the altar in the day when they shall make it, to offer burnt-offerings thereon, and to sprinkle blood thereon. 19. And thou shalt give to the priest the Levites that be of the seed of Zadok, which approach unto me, to minister unto me, saith the Lord God, a young bullock for a sin-offering. 20. And thou shalt take of the blood thereof, and put it on the four horns of it, and on the four corners of the settle, and upon the border round about; thus shalt thou cleanse and purge it. 21. Thou shalt take the bullock also of the sin-offering, and he shall burn it in the appointed place of the house, without the sanctuary. 22. And on the second day thou shalt offer a kid of the goats without blemish for a sin-offering; and they shall cleanse the altar, as they did cleanse it with the bullock. 23. When thou hast made an end of cleansing it, thou shalt offer a young bullock without blemish, and a ram out of the flock without blemish. 24. And thou shalt offer them before the Lord, and the priests shall cast salt upon them, and they shall offer them up, for a burnt-offering unto the Lord. 25. Seven days shalt thou prepare every day a goat for a sin-offering: they shall also prepare a young bullock, and a ram out of the flock, without blemish. 26. Seven days shall they purge the altar, and purify it; and they shall consecrate themselves. 27. And when these days are expired, it shall be, that upon the eighth day, and so forward, the priests shall make your burnt-offerings upon the altar, and your peace-offerings; and I will accept you, saith the Lord God.

13. And these are the measures of the altar after the cubits: The cubit is a cubit and a hand-breadth; even the bottom shall be a cubit, and the breadth a cubit, and the border thereof by the edge thereof round about shall be a span: and this shall be the higher place of the altar. 14. And from the bottom upon the greater settle shall be four cubits, and the breadth one cubit; and from the lesser set-
CHAP. XLI.

In this chapter we have, I. The appropriating of the east gate of the temple to the prince, v. 1–5. II. A reproof sent to the house of Israel for their former profanations of God's sanctuary, with a charge to them to be more strict for the future, v. 4–9. III. The degrading of these Levites that had formerly been guilty of idolatry, and the establishing of the priesthood in the family of Zadok, which had kept their integrity, v. 10–16. IV. Divers laws and ordinances concerning the priests, v. 17–31.

1. Then he brought me back the way of the gate of the outward sanctuary, which looketh toward the east, and it was shut. 2. Then said the Lord unto me, This gate shall be shut, it shall not be opened, and no man shall enter in by it; because the Lord, the God of Israel, hath entered in by it, therefore it shall be shut. 3. It is for the prince; the prince he shall sit in it to eat bread before the Lord: he shall enter by the way of the porch of that gate, and shall go out by the way of the same.

The prophet is here brought to review what he had before once surveyed; for though we have often looked into the things of God, they will yet bear to be looked over again, such a copiousness there is in them. The lessons we have learned we should still repeat to ourselves. Every time we review the sacred fabric of holy things, which we have in the scriptures, we shall still find something new which we did not before take notice of. The prophet is brought a third time to the east gate, and finds it shut; which intimates that the rest of the gates were open at all times to the worshippers. But such an account is given of this gate's being shut as puts honour, 1. Upon the God of Israel. It is for the honour of him, that the gate of the inner court, at which his glory entered when he took possession of the house, was ever after kept shut, and no man was allowed to enter it. 2. Upon the prince. The difference ever after made between this and the other gates, that this was shut when the others were open, was intended both to perpetuate the remembrance of the solemn entrance of the glory of the Lord into the house, (which it would remain a traditional evidence of the truth of,) and also to possess the minds of people with a reverence for the Divine Majesty, and with sober awful thoughts of his transcendence; which were designed in God's charge to Moses at the bush, Put off thy shoe from off thy foot. God will have a way by himself. 2. Upon the prince of Israel, v. 3. It is an honour to him, that though he may not enter in by this gate, for no man may; yet, (1.) He shall sit in this gate to eat his share of the peace-offerings, that sacred food, before the Lord. (2.) He shall enter by the way of the porch of that gate, by some little door or wicket, either in the gate, or adjoining to it, which is called the way of the porch. This was to signify that God puts some of his glory upon magistrates, upon the princes of his people, for he has said, Ye are gods. Some by the prince here understand the High Priest, or the sagan or second priest; and that he only was allowed to enter by this gate, for he was God's representative. Christ is the true second Adam, who was condescended to enter the temple in the以内 gate, that is, in the house of the Lord, as our advocate and expiatory sacrifice.
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Then brought he me the way of the north gate before the house: and I looked, and beheld, the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord; and I fell upon my face.

And the Lord said unto me, Son of man, mark well, and behold with thine eyes, and hear with thine ears, all that I say unto thee concerning all the ordinances of the house of the Lord, and all the laws thereof; and mark well the entering in of the house, with every going forth of the sanctuary. And thou shalt say to the rebellions, even to the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God, O ye house of Israel, let it suffice you of all your abominations.

In that ye have brought into my sanctuary, strangers, uncircumcised in heart, and uncircumcised in flesh, to be in my sanctuary, to pollute it, even my house, when ye offer my bread, the fat and the blood, and they have broken my covenant, because of all your abominations. And ye have not kept the charge of my holy things: but ye have set keepers of my charge in my sanctuary for yourselves.

Thus saith the Lord God, No stranger, uncircumcised in heart, nor uncircumcised in flesh, shall enter into my sanctuary, of any stranger that is among the children of Israel.

This is much to the same purport with what we had in the beginning of ch. lixiii. As the prophet must look again upon what he had before seen, so must he be told again what he had before heard. Here, as before, he sees the house filled with the glory of the Lord, which strikes on awe upon him so that his heart fails prostrate at the sight, the humble posture of adoration, and the expression of a holy awe; I fell upon my face. Note, The more we see of the glory of God, the more low we shall lie in our own eyes. Now here,

1. God charges the prophet to take a very particular notice of all he saw, and all that was said to him; (v. 5.) "Mark well, set thine heart, apply thy mind to the discovery now made. Behold with thine eyes what is showed thee, particularly the entering in of the house, and every going forth of it, all the inlets and all the outlets of the sanctuary; those he must take special notice of. Note, In acquainting ourselves with divine things, we must not aim so much at an abstract speculation of things themselves, as at finding the plain, apparent way of converse and communion with them, those things, that we may go in and out and find pasture.

2. Hear with thine ears all that I say unto thee, about the laws and ordinances of the house, which he was to instruct the people in. Note, Those who are appointed to be teachers, have need to be very diligent, careful learners, that they may neither forget any of the things they are intrusted with, nor mistake concerning them.

II. He sends them upon an errand to the people, to the rebellions, even to the house of Israel, v. 6. It is sad to think that the house of Israel should deserve this character from him who perfectly knew them; that a people in covenant with God should be rebellions against him. Who are his subjects, if the house of Israel be rebels? But it is an instance of God's rich mercy, that, though they had been rebellions, yet, being the house of Israel, he does not cast them off, but sends an ambassador to them, to invite and encourage them to return to their allegiance, whereas, not only had they been pleased to kill him. The whole race of mankind is fallen under the character here given of the house of Israel; but our Lord Jesus, when he ascended on high, received gifts for men, even for the rebellions also; that, as here, the Lord God might dwell among them, Ps. lxxxviii. 18.

1. He must tell them of their faults; must show them that their holy house, or, as some read it, their sins. Note, Those that are sent to comfort God's people, must first convince them, and so prepare them for comfort. Let it suffice you of all your abominations, v. 6. Note, It is time for those that have continued long in sin, to reckon it long enough, and too long, and to begin to think of taking up in time, and leaving off their evil courses. Let the time just suffice for you, for by this time, surely, you have surfeited upon your abominations, and are become sick of them, I Pet. iv. 3.

(1.) That they had admitted those to the privileges of the sanctuary, that were not entitled to them; whereas God had said, The stranger that comes nigh shall be put to death, they had not only connived at the intrusion of strangers into the sanctuary, but had admitted them. You brought in strangers uncircumcised in flesh, and therefore under a legal incapacity to enter into the sanctuary—which was a breaking of the covenant of circumcision, throwing down the hedge of their peculiarity, and laying themselves in common with the rest of the world. Yet if these strangers had been devout and good, though they were not circumcised, the crime had not been great; but they were uncircumcised in heart too, unenlightened, unenformed, and strangers indeed to God and all goodness. When they came to offer sacrifice, they brought these with them to feast with them upon the sacrifice, because they were fond of their company, and this was one of their abominations, wherewith they polluted God's sanctuary; it was giving that which was holy unto dogs, Matth. vii. 6. Note, That the admission of such wicked and profane to special ordinances, is a polluting of God's sanctuary, and a great provocation to him.

(2.) That they had employed these in the service of the sanctuary, who were not fit for it. Though none but priests and Levites were to minister in the sanctuary, yet we may suppose that all who were priests and Levites that immediately attended, but chosen men of them, who were best qualified, who were most wise, serious, and conscientious, and most likely to keep the charge of the holy things carefully: but, in making this choice, they had not regard to merit and qualification for the work; You have set keepers of my charge in my sanctuary for yourselves, such as you had some favour or affection for, such as you immediately attended, or hoped to get, money by, or such as would comply with your humours, and would dispense with the laws of the sanctuary to please you; Thus you have not kept the charge of my holy things. Note, Those who have the choice of the keepers of the holy things, if, to serve some secular, selfish purpose, they choose such as are unfit and unfaithful, who really have it laid at their door, but they have betrayed the holy things by lodging them in bad hands.

2. He must tell them their duty; (v. 9.) No stranger shall enter into my sanctuary till he has
first submitted to the laws of it." But lest any should think that this excluded the penitent, believing Gentiles from the church, the stranger here is described to be one that is uncircumcised in heart, not in sincerity consenting to the covenant, nor putting away the filth of the flesh; whereas the believing Gentiles were circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, Col. ii. 11. This circumcision of the heart, in the spirit, not in the letter, was what the unbelieving Jews were strangers to, and unconcerned about, while yet they were zealous to keep out of the sanctuary uncircumcised Gentiles, witness their rage against Paul when they did but suspect him to have brought Greeks into the temple, Acts xxi. 28.

10. And the Levites that are gone away far from me, when Israel went astray, which went astray away from me after their idols; they shall even bear their iniquity. 11. Yet they shall be ministers in my sanctuary, having charge at the gates of the house, and ministering to the house: they shall slay the burnt-offering and the sacrifice for the people, and they shall stand before them to minister unto them. 12. Because they ministered unto them before their idols, and caused the house of Israel to fall into iniquity; therefore have I lifted up my hand against them, saith the Lord God, and they shall bear their iniquity. 13. And they shall not come near unto me to do the office of a priest unto me, nor to come near to any of my holy things, in the most holy place; but they shall bear their shame, and their abominations which they have committed: 14. But I will make them keepers of the charge of the house, for all the service thereof, and for all that shall be done therein. 15. But the priests the Levites, the sons of Zadok, that kept the charge of my sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray from me, they shall come near to me to minister unto me, and they shall stand before me to offer unto me the fat and the blood, saith the Lord God. 16. They shall enter into my sanctuary, and they shall come near to my table to minister unto me, and they shall keep my charge.

The Master of the house, being about to set up house again, takes account of his servants the priests, and sees who are fit to be turned out of their places, and who to be kept in, and takes a course with them accordingly.

1. Those who had been treacherous are degraded and put lower. Those Levites or priests who were carried down in the stream of the compulsory idolatry, who went astray from God after their idols, (v. 10.) who had complied with the idolatrous kings of Israel or Judah, who ministered to them before their idols, (v. 12.) bowed with them in the house of Rimmon, or set up altars for them, as Uriah did for Ahab, and so caused the house of Israel to fall into iniquity, led them to sin, and hardened them in sin; for if the priests go astray, many will follow their pernicious ways. Perhaps in Babylon some of the Jewish priests had complied with the idolaters of the place, to the great scandal of their religion. Now these priests who had thus varicated, were justly put under the marks of God's displeasure; or if they were dead, (as it is probable that they were, if the crime were committed before the captivity,) the iniquity was visited upon their children. Or perhaps it was the whole family of Abiathar that had been guilty of this trespass, which was now called to account for it.

1.) They are sentenced to be deprived, in part, of their office, and from the dignity of priests are put down into the condition of ordinary Levites. God has lifted up his hand against them, has said it, and sworn it, that they shall bear their iniquity, (v. 12.) assuredly they shall suffer for it, shall suffer disgrace for it; they shall bear their shame; (v. 13.) for though they have not charitably kept it, they have not continued it. Yet they shall not come near to do the office of a priest, those parts of the office that were peculiar to them, they shall not come near to any of the holy things within the sanctuary, v. 13. Note, Those who have robbed God of his honour, will justly be deprived of their honour. And it is really a great punishment to be forbidden to come near to God; and justly might they who have once gone away from him be thus visited upon, and cast out from near him, and put at an everlasting distance.

2.) Yet there is a mixture of mercy in this sentence. God deals not in severity, as he might have done, with those who had dealt treacherously with him, but mitigates the sentence, v. 11, 14. They are deprived, but in part, of their office, and it should seem, not at all a benefice—of their emoluments. They shall help to slay the sacrifice, which the Levites were permitted to do, and which in this temple was done, not at the altar, but at the tables, ch. xl. 59. They shall be porters at the gates of the house, and they shall be keepers of the charge of the house, for all the service thereof. Note, Those who may not be fit to be employed in one kind of service, may yet be fit to be employed in another; and even those who have offended may yet be made use of, and not quite thrown aside, much less thrown away.

2. Those who had been faithful are honoured and established, v. 15, 16. These are remarkably distinguished from the other; But the sons of Zadok, who kept their integrity in a time of general apostacy, who went not astray when others did, they shall come near to me, shall come near to my table. Note, Those who will not give proofs of their fidelity and constancy to him in shaking, trying times, and will employ those in his service, who have kept close to his service, when others deserted it, and drew back. And it ought to be reckoned a true and great reward of stability in duty, to be established in it. If we keep close to God, God will keep us close to him.

17. And it shall come to pass, that, when they enter in at the gates of the inner court, they shall be clothed with linen garments; and no wool shall come upon them while they minister in the gates of the inner court, and within. 18. They shall have linen bonnets upon their heads, and shall have linen breeches upon their loins; they shall not gird themselves with any thing that causeth sweat. 19. And when they go forth into the outer court, even into the outer court to the people, they shall put off their garments wherein they ministered, and lay them
in the holy chambers, and they shall put on other garments; and they shall not sanctify the people with their garments. 20. Neither shall they shave their heads, nor suffer their locks to grow long; they shall only poll their heads. 21. Neither shall any priest drink wine, when they enter into the inner court. 22. Neither shall they take for their wives a widow, or her that is put away: but they shall take maidens of the seed of the house of Israel, or a widow that had a priest before. 23. And they shall teach my people the difference between the holy and profane, and cause men to discern between the unclean and the clean. 24. And in controversy they shall stand in judgment; and they shall judge it according to my judgments: and they shall keep my laws and my statutes in all mine assemblies; and they shall hallow my sabbaths. 25. And they shall come at no dead person to defile themselves: but for father, or for mother, or for son, or for daughter, for brother, or for sister that hath no husband, they may defile themselves. 26. And after he is cleansed they shall reckon unto him seven days. 27. And in the day that he goeth into the sanctuary, unto the inner court, to minister in the sanctuary, he shall offer his sin-offering, saith the Lord God. 28. And it shall be unto them for an inheritance; I am their inheritance: and ye shall give them no possession in Israel; I am their possession. 29. They shall eat the meat-offering, and the sin-offering, and the trespass-offering; and every dedicated thing in Israel shall be theirs. 30. And the first of all the first-fruits of all things, and every oblation of all, of every sort of your oblations, shall be the priest's: ye shall also give unto the priest the first of your dough, that he may cause the blessing to rest in thine house. 31. The priests shall not eat of any thing that is dead of itself, or torn, whether it be fowl or beast.

God's priests must be regulars, not seculars; and therefore here are rules laid down for them to govern themselves by, and due encouragement given them to live up to those rules. Directions are here given.

I. Concerning their clothes; they must wear linen garments, when they went in to minister: or do any service in the inner court, or in the sanctuary, and nothing that was woollen, because it would cause sweat, v. 17, 18. They must dress themselves cool, that they might go the more readily about their work; and they had the more need to do so, because they were to attend the altars, which had constant fires upon them. And they must dress themselves clean and meet, and avoid every thing that was sweaty and filthy, to signify the purity of mind with which the service of God is to be attended to. Sweat came in with sin, and was a part of the curse; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread. Clothes came in with sin, coats of skins did; and therefore the priests must use as little and as light clothing as possible, and not such as caused sweat. When they had finished their service, they must change their clothes again, and lay up their linen garments in the chambers appointed for that purpose, (v. 19.) as before, ch. xiii. 14. They must not go among the people with their holy garments on, lest they should imagine themselves sanctified by the touch of them; on the other hand, they must suffer their locks to grow long, as the beaux, or that they might be thought Nazarites, when really they were not; but they must be grave and modest, must poll their heads, and keep their hair short; if a man, especially a minister, wear long hair, it is not becoming, (1 Cor. xi. 14.) it is effeminate.

II. Concerning their hair; in that they must avoid extremes on both hands; (v. 20.) They must not shave their heads, in imitation of the Gentile priests, and as the priests of the Romish church do; nor, on the other hand, must they suffer their locks to grow long, as the beaux, or that they might be thought Nazarites, when really they were not; but they must be grave and modest, must poll their heads, and keep their hair short; if a man, especially a minister, wear long hair, it is not becoming, (1 Cor. xi. 14.) it is effeminate.

III. Concerning their diet; they must be sure to drink no wine when they went in to minister, lest they should drink to excess, should drink, and for the law, v. 21. It is not for kings to drink wine, more than will do them good, much less for priests. See Lev. x. 9. Prov. xxx. 4, 5.

IV. Concerning their marriages; (v. 22.) here they must consult the credit of their office, and not marry one that had been divorced, that was at least under the suspicion of immodesty, nor a widow, unless she were a priest's widow, that had been accustomed to the usages of the priests' families. Others may do that which ministers may not do, but must deny themselves in, in honour of their character. Their wives as well as themselves must be of good report.

V. Concerning their preaching and church-government.

1. It was part of their business to teach the people; and herein they must approve themselves both skilful and faithful; (v. 23.) They shall teach my people the difference between the holy and the profane, between good and evil, lawful and unlawful, that they may neither scruple what is lawful, nor venture upon what is unlawful; that they may not hesitate what is just, nor pollute themselves with that which is profane. Ministers must take pains to cause people to discern between the clean and the unclean, that they may not confound the distinctions between right and wrong, nor mistake concerning them, so as to put darkness for light, and light for darkness, but may have a good judgment of discretion concerning their own actions.

2. It was part of their business to judge upon appeals made to them; (Deut. xix. 8, 9.) and in controversy they shall stand in judgment, v. 24. They shall have the honesty to stand up for what is right, and, when they have passed a right judgment, shall have the courage to stand to it, and stand by it. They must judge, not according to their own fancies, or inclinations, or secular interests, but according to my judgments; that must be their rule and standard. Note, Ministers must decide controversies according to the word of God, to the law and to the testimony; Sit alter judex.—Let the judge be unbiased. Their business is to keep courts in God's name, to preside in the congregations of his people. And herein they must go by the statute-book; They shall keep my statutes in all mine assemblies. God is the author of it; that must be their rule and standard. Note, Ministers are the masters of those assemblies, to preside in them, and in all their acts must keep
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close to God's law. Another part of their work, as church-governors, is, to hallow God's sabbaths, to do the public work of that day with a becoming care and reverence, as the work of a holy day should be done; and to see that God's people also sanctify the day of rest in order to please it.

VI. Concerning their mourning for dead relations; the rule here agrees with the law of Moses, Lev. xxi. 1, 11. A priest shall not come near any dead body, (for they must be purged from dead works,) except of his next relations, v. 25. Decent expressions of a pious sorrow for dear relations, when they are removed by death, are not disagreeable to the character of a minister. Yet by this approach to the dead body of a relation they contracted a ceremonial pollution, from which they must be cleansed by a sin-offering, before they went in again to minister, v. 26, 27. Note, Though sorrow for the dead is very allowable and commendable, yet there is danger of sinning in it, either by excess or dissimulation; and those tears have too often need to be wept over again.

VII. Concerning their maintenance; they must live upon the altar at which they served, and live comfortably; (v. 28.) Ye shall give them no possession in Israel, no lands or tenements, lest they should be entangled with the affairs of this life; for God has said, I am their Inheritance, and they need no other in reserve; I am their Possession, and their possession in the holy land, were not allowed them, (ch. xlvii. 10.) but their principal subsistence was by their office. What God appropriated to himself, they were the receivers of, for their own proper use and benefit; they lived upon the holy things; and so God himself was the Portion both of their inheritance and of their cup. Note, Those who have God for their Inheritance and their Possession, may be content with a little, and ought not to covet a great deal of the possessions and inheritances of this earth. If we have God, we have all; and therefore may well reckon that we have enough.

Observe, 1. What the priests were to have from the people, for their maintenance and encouragement. (1.) They must have the flesh of many of the offerings, the sin-offering and trespass-offering, with the blood thereof, and their Eucharist, and the flesh-meat; and the meat-offerings, which would supply them with bread. What we offer to God, will redound to our own advantage. (2.) They must have every dedicated, devoted thing in Israel, which was in many cases to be turned into money, and given to the priest. This is explained, v. 30. every oblation or free-will-offering, which in times of reformation and devotion would be many and considerable. Of all, of every sort of your oblations, shall be the priest's. We have the law concerning them, Lev. xxvii. (3.) They were to have the first of the dough, when it was going to the oven, as well as the first of their fruits, when they were going to the barn. God, who is the first, must have the first; and if it belong to him, his priests must have the second. We may enjoy what we have, when a share of it has been first set apart for works of piety and charity. To this the apostle's rule bears some analogy, to begin the week with laying by for pious uses, 1 Cor. xvi. 2. The priests being so well provided for, it would be inexcusable in them, if they (contrary to the law which every Israelite is bound by) should eat that which is tithed, or dead of itself, v. 31. Those that were in want of necessary food, might, perhaps, expect to be dispens'd with in such a case. Poverty has its temptations, but the priests were so well provided for, that they could have no pretence for it.

2. What the people might expect from the priest for their recompense. They that are kind to a pro-

phet, to a priest, shall have a prophet's, a priest's reward, that he may cause the blessing to rest in thine house, (v. 29.) that God may cause it by commanding it, that the priest may cause it by praying for it; and it was part of the priest's work to bless the people in the name of the Lord, not only their congregations, but their families. Note, It is all in all to the comfort of any house, to have the blessing of God upon it, and to have the blessing to rest in it; to dwell where we dwell, and to attend the entail of it upon those that shall come after us. And the way to have the blessing of God abide upon our estates, is to honour God with them, and to give him and his ministers, him and his poor, their share out of them. God blesses, he surely blesses, the habitation of those who thus are just, Prov. iii. 33. And ministers, by instructing and praying for the families that are kind to them, should do their part toward causing the blessing to rest there. Peace be to this house.

CHAP. XLV.

In this chapter is further represented to the prophet, in vision, 1. The division of the holy land: so much for the temple, and the priests that attended the service of it; (v. 1.) This was necessary for them to live in the city; (v. 6.) so much for the prince, and the residue to the people, v. 7, 8. 11. The ordinances of justice that were given both to prince and people, v. 9., 12. 11. This oblation was to be given by the prince, and the prince's family, in those oblations, v. 13., 17. Particularly in the beginning of the year, (v. 18., 20.) and in the passover, and the feast of tabernacles, v. 21., 25. And all this seems to point at the new church-state that should be set up under the gospel, which, both for extent and for purity, should far exceed that of the Old Testament.

1. MOREOVER, when ye shall divide by lot the land for inheritance, ye shall offer an oblation unto the Lord, a holy portion of the land: the length shall be the length of five and twenty thousand reeds, and the breadth shall be ten thousand. This shall be holy in all the borders thereof round about. 2. Of this there shall be for the sanctuary five hundred in length, with five hundred in breadth, square round about; and fifty cubits round about for the suburbs thereof. 3. And of this measure shall thou measure the length of five and twenty thousand, and the breadth of ten thousand: and in it shall be the sanctuary and the most holy place. 4. The holy portion of the land shall be for the priests, the ministers of the sanctuary, which shall come near to minister unto the Lord; and it shall be a place for their houses, and a holy place for the sanctuary. 5. And the five and twenty thousand of length, and the ten thousand of breadth, shall also the Levites, the ministers of the house, have for themselves, for a possession for twenty chambers. 6. And ye shall appoint the possession of the city five thousand broad, and five and twenty thousand long, over against the oblation of the holy portion: it shall be for the whole house of Israel. 7. And a portion shall be for the prince on the one side and on the other side of the oblation of the holy portion, and of the possession of the city, before the oblation
of the holy portion, and before the possession of the city, from the west side westward, and from the east side eastward; and the length shall be over against one of the portions, from the west border unto the east border. 8. In the land shall be his possession in Israel: and my princes shall no more oppress my people; and the rest of the land shall they give to the house of Israel according to their tribes.

Directions are here given for the dividing of the land after their return to it; and, God having promised them to do it, it would be an act of faith and not of folly, thus to divide it before they had it. And it would be welcome news to the captives, to hear that they should not only return to their own land, but that, whereas they were now but few in number, they should increase and multiply, so as to replenish it. But this never had its accomplishment in the Jewish state after the return out of captivity, but was performed, in a manner, in the Chriftian church, which was perfectly new, (as this division of the land was quite different from that in Joshua's time,) and much enlarged by the accession of the Gentiles to it; and will be perfected in the heavenly kingdom, of which the land of Canaan had always been a type. Now,

1. Here is the portion of land assigned to the sanctuary in the midst of which the temple was to be built, with all its courts and purificns; the rest round about it was for the priests. This is called (v. 1.) on Glration to the Lord: for what is given in works of piety, for the maintenance and support of the worship of God and the advancement of religion, God accepts as given to him, if it be done with a single eye. It is a holy portion of the land, which is to be set out first as the first-fruits that sanctify the lump. The appropriating of lands for the support of religion and the ministry, is an act of piesty that bids as fair for perpetuity, and the benefit of posterity, as any other. This holy portion of the land was to be measured, and the borders of it fixed, that the sanctuary itself might not have more than its share, and in time engross the whole land. So the lands of the church shall extend no further; as in our own kingdom donations to the church were of old limited by the statute of mortmain. The lands here allotted to the sanctuary were 25,000 eeds (so our translation makes it, though some make them only cubits) in length, and 10,000 in breadth; about eighty miles one way, and thirty miles another way, say some; sixty-five miles one way, and ten miles the other way, so some. The priests and Levites that were to come near to minister, were to have their dwellings in this portion of the land, that was round about the sanctuary, that they might be near their work; whereas by the distribution of the land in Joshua's time, the cities of the priests and Levites were dispersed all the nation over. This intimates that gospel-ministers should reside upon their charge; where their service lies, there must they live.

2. Next to the lands of the sanctuary, the city-lands are assigned, in which the holy city was to be built, and with the issues and profits of which the citizens were to be maintained; (v. 6.) It shall be for the whole house of Israel: not appropriated, as before, to one tribe or two, but some of all the tribes shall dwell in the city, as we find they did, Neh. xi. 1, 2. The portion for the city was full as long, but only half as broad, as that for the sanctuary; for the city was enriched by trade, and therefore had the less need of lands.

3. The next allotment after the church-lands and the city-lands, is of the crown-lands, v. 7, 8. Here is no admeasurement of these, but they are to fall on the one side, and on the other side, of the church-lands and city-lands, to intiate that the prince with his wealth and power was to be a protection to both. Some make the prince's share equal to the church's and city's share both together; others make it to be a thirtieth of the rest of the land, the other twelve being for the twelve tribes. The prince that attends continually to the administration of public affairs, and has not his dignity, and have abundance, that he may not be in temptation to oppress the people; which yet with many does not prevent that. But the grace of God shall prevent it, for it is promised here, My princes shall no more oppress my people; for God will make the officers peace, and the executors righteousness. Notwithstanding this, we find that after the return of the Jews to their own land, the princes were complained of for their exactions. But Nehemiah was one that did not do as the former governors, and yet kept a handsome court, Neh. v. 15, 18. But so much is said of the prince in this mystical holy state, to intiate that in the gospel-church, magistrates should be as nursing-fathers to it, and Christian princes its patrons and protectors; and God will give them an abundant inheritance, and make them subject to the power of God, to restrain them from oppressing God's people, because they are more his people than theirs.

4. The rest of the lands were to be distributed to the people, according to their tribes, who had reason to think themselves well settled, when they had both the testimony of Israel so near them, and the throne of judgment.

9. Thus spake the Lord God, Let it suffice you, O princes of Israel: remove violence and spoil, and execute judgment and justice, take away your exactions from my people, saith the Lord God. 10. Ye shall have just balances, and a just ephah, and a just bath. 11. The ephah and the bath shall be of one measure, that the bath may contain the tenth part of a homer, and the ephah the tenth part of a homer: the measure thereof shall be after the homer. 12. And the shekel shall be twenty gerahs: twenty shekels, five and twenty shekels, fifteen shekels shall be your maneh.

We have here some general rules of justice laid down both for prince and people, the rules of distributive and concentative justice; for godliness without honesty is but a form of godliness, will neither please God, nor avail to the benefit of any people. Be it therefore enacted, by the authority of the church's King and God,

1. That princes do not oppress their subjects, but duly and faithfully administer justice among them; (v. 9.) 44 Let it suffice you, O princes of Israel, that you have been oppressive to the people, and have enriched yourselves by spoil and violence, that you have so long fleeced the flock instead of feeding them, and from henceforward do so no more. 45 Note, Even princes and great men that have long done amiss, must at length think it time, high time, to reform and amend; for no prescription will justify a wrong. Instead of saying that they have been long accustomed to oppress, and therefore may persist in it, for the custom will bear them out, they should say that they have been long accustomed to it, and therefore as here, Let the time past suffice, and let them now remove violence and spoil; let them drop wrongful demands, cancel wrongful
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usages, and turn out those from employments under
them, that do violence. Let them take away their
exactions, ease their subjects of those taxes which
they had laid upon them, and let them execute
judgment and justice according to law, as the duty
of their place requires. Note, All princes, but espe-
cially the princes of Israel, are concerned to do
justice; for of their people God says, They are my
people, and they in a special manner rule for God.
2. That one neighbour do not cheat another in
commerce; (v. 16.) Ye shall have just balances, in
which to weigh both money and goods; a just ephah
for dry measure for corn and flour, and a just bath
the measure of liquids, wine, and oil; and the ephah
and bath shall be one measure, the tenth part of an
omer, or cor, v. 11. So that the ephah and bath
contained (as the learned Dr. Cumberland has com-
puted) seven wine gallons and four pints, and some-
thing more. An omer was but the tenth part of an
ephah, (Exod. xvi. 36.) and the 160th part of a
chomer, or homer, and contained about six pints.
The shekel is here settled; (v. 13.) it is twenty
geras, just half a Roman ounce; in our money, 2s.
4½d. and almost the eighth part of a farthing; as the
aforesaid learned man exactly computes it. By
the shekels, the maneh, or pound, was reckoned; which,
when it was set for a mere weight, (says Bishop
Cumberland,) without respect to coinage, contained
just 100 shekels, as appears by comparing 4 Kings
xv. 17. where it is said three menahs, or pounds, of
silver went to one shield, with the parallel place, 2 Chron.
ix. 16. where it is said 300 shekels of gold went to
one shield. But when the maneh is set for a sum of
money or coin, it contains but sixty shekels, as ap-
ppears here; where twenty shekels, twenty-five she-
kels, and fifteen shekels, which in all make sixty,
shall be the maneh. But it is thus reckoned, be-
cause they had many uses of money, as with-
twenty shekels, another twenty-five, another fifteen,
all which made up one pound; as a learned writer
here observes. Note, It concerns God's Israel to
be very honest and just in all their dealings, very
punctual and exact in rendering to all their due, and
very cautious to do wrong to none, because otherwise
they spoil the acceptableness of their profession with
God, and the reputation of it before men.
13. This is the oblation that ye shall of-
er; the sixth part of an ephah of a homer
of wheat, and ye shall give the sixth part of
an ephah of a homer of barley. 14. Con-
cerning the ordinance of oil, the bath of oil,
ye shall offer the tenth part of a bath out of
the cor, which is a homer of ten baths; for
ten baths are a homer: 15. And one lamb
out of the flock, out of two hundred, out of
the fat pastures of Israel, for a meat-offer-
ing, and for a burnt-offering; and for peace-
 offerings, to make reconciliation for them,
saith the Lord God. 16. All the people
of the land shall give this oblation for the prince
in Israel. 17. And it shall be the prince's
part to give burnt-offerings, and meat-offer-
ings, and drink-offerings, in the feasts, and
in the new moons, and in the sabbaths, in all
solemnities of the house of Israel: he shall
prepare the sin-offering, and the meat-offer-
ing, and the burnt-offering, and the peace-
offerings, to make reconciliation for the house
of Israel. 18. Thus saith the Lord God,
In the first month, in the first day of the
month, thou shalt take a young bullock with-
out blemish, and cleanse the sanctuary: 19.
And the priest shall take of the blood of the
sin-offering, and put it upon the posts of
the house, and upon the four corners of the set-
tle of the altar, and upon the posts of the
gate of the inner court. 20. And so thou
shall do the seventh day of the month for
every one that errth, and for him that is
simple: so shall ye reconcile the house. 21.
In the first month, in the fourteenth day of
the month, ye shall have the passover, a
feast of seven days; unleavened bread shall
be eaten. 22. And upon that day shall
the prince prepare for himself, and for all
the people of the land, a bullock for a sin-of-
fering. 23. And seven days of the feast he
shall prepare a burnt-offering to the Lord;
seven bullocks and seven rams without
blemish, daily the seven days; and a kid of
the goats daily for a sin-offering. 24. And
he shall prepare a meat-offering of an ephah
for a bullock, and an ephah for a ram, and
a bin of oil for an ephah. 25. In the seventh
month, in the fifteenth day of the month,
shall he do the like in the feast of the seven
days, according to the sin-offering, accord-
ing to the burnt-offering, and according to
the meat-offering, and according to the oil.

Having laid down the rules of righteousness to-
ward men, which is really a branch of true religion,
he comes next to give some directions for their reli-
gion toward God, which is a branch of universal
righteousness.

1. It is required that they offer an oblation to
the Lord, out of what they have; (v. 13.) All the peo-
ple of the land must give an oblation, v. 16. As
God's tenants, they must pay a quitrent to their
Lord; they had offered an oblation out of
their real estates, (v. 1.) a holy portion of their land;
now they are directed to offer an oblation out of
their personal estates, their goods and chattels, as
an acknowledgment of their receipts from him,
their dependence on him, and their obligations to
him. Note, Whatever our substance is, we must
honour God with it, by giving him his dues out of
it. Not that God has need of, or may be benefited
by any thing that we can give him, Ps. 1. 9. No,
it is but an oblation, we only offer it to him, the
benefit of it returns back to ourselves, to his poor,
who, as our neighbours, are ourselves, or to his mi-
nisters who serve continually for our good.

2. The proportion of this oblation is here deter-
mined, which was not done by the law of Moses.
No mention is made of the tithe, but only of this
oblation. The fourth part of this is thus settled.
(1.) Out of their corn they were to offer a sixtieth
part; out of every homer of wheat and barley, which
contained ten ephahs, they were to offer the sixth
part of one ephah, which was a sixtieth part of the
whole, v. 13. (2.) Out of their oil, and probably
their wine too; they were to offer an hundredth part,
for this oblation; out of every ephah of oil, which
contained ten baths, they were to offer the tenth
part of one bath, v. 14. This was given to the al-
tar; for in every meat-offering there was flour min-
gled with oil. (3.) Out of their flocks they were to
give one lamb out of 500; that was the smallest pro
portion of all, v. 13. But it must be out of the fat pastures of Israel. They must not offer to God that which was taken up from the common, but the fattest and best they had, for burni-offerings and peace-offerings; the former were offered for the giving of glory to God, the latter for the fetching in of mercy, grace, and peace from God; and in our times, to this purpose, the finest creatures are offered at the throne of grace; but, in order to the acceptance of both, these sacrifices were to make reconciliation for them. Christ is our Sacrifice of atonement, by whom reconciliation is made, and to him we must have an eye, in our sacrifices of acknowledgment.

11. This oblation must be given for the prince in Israel. Some read it to the prince, and understand it of Christ, who is indeed the Prince in Israel, to whom we must offer our oblations, and into whose hands we must put them, to be presented to the Father. Or, They shall give it with the prince; every private person shall bring his oblation, to be offered with that of the prince. For it follows, (v. 17.) It shall be the prince's part to provide all the oblations, to make reconciliation for the house of Israel. The people were to bring their oblations to him, according to the foregoing rules, and he was to bring them to the sanctuary, and to make up what fell short out of his own. Note, It is the duty of rulers to take care of religion, and to see that the duties of it be regularly and carefully performed by these under their charge; and that nothing be wanting that is requisite therefor: they must be, the keeper of both tables; and it is a happy thing when those that are above others in power and dignity, go before them in the service of God.

IV. Some particular solemnities are here appointed.

1. Here is one in the beginning of the year, which seems to be altogether required not instituted by the law of Moses: it is the annual solemnity of cleansing the sanctuary. (1.) On the first day of the first month, upon new-year's-day, they were to offer a sacrifice for the cleansing of the sanctuary, (v. 18.) to make atonement for the iniquity of the holy things the year past, that they might bring none of the guilt of them into the services of the new year; and to implore grace for the preventing of the sins of the year past, for which they were to fast for the service of the sanctuary the ensuing year. And, in token of this, the blood of this sin-offering was to be put upon the posts of the temple, the four corners, not of the altar, but the settle of the altar, and the posts of the gate of the inner court, (v. 19.) to signify that by it atonement was intended to be made for the sins of all the servants that attended that house, priests, Levites, and people, even the sins that were found in all their services. Note, Even sanctuaries on earth need cleansing, frequent cleansing; that above needs none. Those that worship God together, should often join in renewing their repentance for their manifold defects, and applying the blood of Christ for the pardon of them, and in renewing their covenants to be more careful for the future, and it is very reasonable to begin the year with this work; as Hezekiah did when it had been long neglected, 2 Chron. xxix. 17. They were here appointed to cleanse the sanctuary upon the first day of the month, because on the fourteenth day of the month they were to eat the passover, an ordinance which, of all the other Old Testament institutions, had most in it of Christ and his gospel, and they were very fit that they should begin to prepare for it a fortnight before, by cleansing the sanctuary. (2.) This sacrifice was to be repeated on the seventh day of the first month, v. 20. And then it was intended to make atonement for every one that errs, and for him that is simple. Note, He that sins, errs, and is simple; he mistakes, he goes out of the way, and shows himself to be foolish and unwise. But here it is spoken of those sins which are committed through ignorance, mis-, or inadvertency, whether by any of the priests, or of the Levites, or of the people. Sacrifices were appointed to be offered for such sins as men were surprised into, did before they were aware: which they would not have done, if they had known and remembered aught, which they were overtaken in, and for which, afterward, they condemn themselves. But for presumptions sins, committed with a high hand, there was no sacrifice appointed, Numb. xv. 30. By these repeated sacrifices ye shall reconcile the house; and it will be reconciled to it, and continue the tokens of his presence in it, and will let it alone this year also.

2. The passover was to be religiously observed at the time appointed, v. 21. Christ is our Passover, that is sacrificed for us; we celebrate the memorial of that sacrifice, and feast upon it, triumphing in our deliverance out of the Egyptian slavery of sin, and our preservation from the snares of the destroying angel, the sword of divine justice, in the Lord's supper, which is our passover-feast; as the whole Christian life is, and must be, the feast of unleavened bread. It is here appointed that the prince shall prepare a sin-offering to be offered for himself and the people; a bullock on the first day, (v. 22.) and a kid of the goats every other day, (v. 23.) to teach us, in all our attendance upon God for communion with him, to have an eye to the great Sin- Offering, by which transgression was finished, and an everlasting righteousness brought in. On every day of the feast there was to be a burnt-offering, purely for the honour of God, and no less than seven bullocks and seven rams, with their meat-offerings, which were wholly consumed upon the altar. And yet no profit, v. 23, 24. 3. The feast of tabernacles; that is spoken of next, (v. 25.) and no mention of the feast of pentecost, which came between that of the passover and that of tabernacles. Orders are here given (above what were given by the law of Moses) for the same sacrifices to be offered during the seven days of the passover. See the deficiency of the legal sacrifices for sin; they were therefore often repeated, not only for the sake of the prince, but because they could not make the corners thereof perfect, Heb. x. 1, 3. See the necessity of our frequently repeating the same religious exercises. Though the sacrifice of atonement is offered once for all, yet the sacrifices of acknowledgment, that of a broken heart, that of a thankful heart, must be every day offered, those spiritual sacrifices which are acceptable to God through Christ Jesus. We should, as here, fall into a method of holy duties, and keep to it.

CHAP. XLVI.

In this chapter, we have, I. Some further rules given both to the priests and to the people, relating to their worship, v. 1-13. II. A law concerning the prince's disposal of his inheritance, v. 16. 18. III. A description of the places provided for the boiling of the sacrifices, and the baking of the meat-offerings, v. 19. 24. 1. Thus saith the Lord God, The gate of the inner court that looketh toward the east shall be shut the six working days; but on the sabbath it shall be opened, and in the day of the new moon it shall be opened. 2. And the prince shall enter by the way of the porch of that gate without, and shall stand by the post of the gate,
the priest shall prepare his burnt-offering and his peace-offerings, and he shall worship at the threshold of the gate; then he shall go forth; but the gate shall not be shut until the evening. 3. Likewise the people of the land shall worship at the door of this gate before the Lord, in the sabbaths, and in the new moons. 4. And the burnt-offering that the prince shall offer unto the Lord in the sabbath-day shall be six lambs without blemish, and a ram without blemish. 5. And the meat-offering shall be an ephah for a ram, and the meat-offering for the lambs as he shall be able to give, and a hin of oil to an ephah. 6. And in the day of the new moon it shall be a young bullock without blemish, and six lambs, and a ram: they shall be without blemish. 7. And he shall prepare a meat-offering, an ephah for a bullock, and an ephah for a ram; and for the lambs according as his hand shall attain unto, and a hin of oil to an ephah. 8. And when the prince shall enter, he shall go in by the way of the porch of that gate, and he shall go forth by the way thereof. 9. But when the people of the land shall come before the Lord in the solemn feasts, he that entereth in by the way of the north gate to worship shall go out by the way of the south gate; and he that entereth by the way of the south gate shall go forth by the way of the north gate: he shall not return by the way of the gate whereby he came in, but shall go forth over against it. 10. And the prince in the midst of them, when they go in, shall go in; and when they go forth, shall go forth: 11. And in the feasts, and in the solemnities, the meat-offering shall be an ephah to a bullock, and an ephah to a ram; and to the lambs as he is able to give, and a hin of oil to an ephah. 12. Now when the prince shall prepare a voluntary burnt-offering or peace-offerings voluntarily unto the Lord, one shall then open him the gate that looketh toward the east, and he shall prepare his burnt-offering and his peace-offerings as he did on the sabbath-day; then he shall go forth; and after his going forth one shall shut the gate. 13. Then shall daily prepare a burnt-offering unto the Lord of a lamb of the first year without blemish; thou shalt prepare it every morning. 14. And thou shalt prepare a meat-offering for it every morning, the sixth part of an ephah, and the third part of a hin of oil, to temper with the fine flour; a meat-offering continually, by a perpetual ordinance, unto the Lord. 15. Thus shall they prepare the lamb, and the meat-offer-
baths and in the new moons, (v. 3) and that, when they come in, and go out, the prince shall be in the midst of them, v. 10. Note, Great men should by their constant and reverent attendance on God in public worship, give a good example to their inferiors, both engaging them and encouraging them to do likewise. It is a very gracious, becoming thing for persons of quality to go to church with their servants, and tenants, and poor neighbours about them, and to behave themselves there with an air of seriousness and devotion; and those who thus honour God with their honour, the Lord will not withdraw his favour from them.

10. Thus saith the Lord God, If the prince give a gift unto any of his sons, the inheritance thereof shall be his sons' ; it shall be their possession by inheritance. 17. But if he give a gift of his inheritance to one of his servants, then it shall be his to the year of liberty; after it shall return to the prince: but his inheritance shall be his sons' for them.

18. Moreover, the prince shall not take of the people's inheritance by oppression, to thrust them out of their possession; but he shall give his sons inheritance out of his own possession; that my people be not scattered every man from his possession.

We have here a law for the limiting of the power of the prince in the disposing of the crown-lands. 1. If he have a son that is a favourite, or has merited well, he may, if he please, as a token of his favour, and in recompense for his services, settle some parts of his lands upon him and his heirs for ever, (v. 16.) provided it do not go out of the family: there may be a case for parents, when their children are grown up, to be more kind to one than to another; as Joseph gave to Joseph one portion above his brethren, Gen. xlviii. 22.

2. Yet if he have a servant that is a favourite, he may not in like manner settle lands upon him, v. 17. But if he see cause, he may give him lands to the year of Jubile, and then they must return to the family again, v. 17. The servant might have the rents, issues, and profits, for such a term, but the inheritance, the LEGATIORIUM.—The right of proprietorship, shall remain in the prince and his heirs. It was fit that a difference should be put between a child and a servant, like that, John viii. 35. The servant abides not in the house for ever, as the son does.

3. What estates he gives his children, must be of his own; (v. 18.) He shall not take of the people's inheritance, under pretence of having many children and many dependants, provided he do not forbid them to sell their estates, or force them to sell them, and so thrust his subjects out of their possession; but let him and his sons be content with their own. It is far from being a prince's honour to increase the wealth of his family and crown, by encroaching upon the rights and properties of his subjects; nor will he himself be a gainer by it at last, for he will but do a poor prince, when the people are scattered every man from his possession, when they quit their native country, being forced out of it by oppression; choosing rather to live among strangers that are free people, and where what they have they can call their own, be it ever so little. It is the interest of princes to rule in the hearts of their subjects, and then all they have is, in the best manner, at their command, because they have a way to gain their affections, by protecting their rights, than to gain their estates by invading them.

19. After he brought me through the entry, which was at the side of the gate, into the holy chambers of the priests, which looked toward the north: and, behold, there was a place on the two sides westward. 20. Then said he unto me, This is the place where the
priests shall boil the trespass-offering and the sin-offering, where they shall bake the meat-offering; that they bear them not out into the outer court, to sanctify the people. 21. Then he brought me forth into the outer court, and caused me to pass by the four corners of the court; and, behold, in every corner of the court there was a court. 22. In the four corners of the court there were courts joined of forty cubits long, and thirty broad: these four corners were of one measure. 23. And there was a new building round about in them, round about them four; and it was made with boiling-places under the rows round about. 24. Then said he unto me, These are the places of them that boil, where the ministers of the house shall boil the sacrifice of the people.

We have here a further discovery of buildings about the temple, which we did not observe before; and these were places to boil the flesh of the offering.

v. 20. He that kept such a plentiful table at his altar, needed large kitchens; and a wise builder will provide conveniencies of that kind. Observe,

1. Where those boiling-places were situated. There were some at the entrance into the inner court, (v. 19.) and others under the rows, in the four corners of the outer court, v. 21—23. These are the places, where, it is likely, there was most room to spare for this purpose; and this purpose was found for the spare room, that none might be lost. Pity that holy ground should be waste ground.

2. What use they were put to. In those places they were to 'boil the trespass-offering, and the sin-offering,' those parts of them which were allotted to the priests, and which were more sacred than the flesh of the peace-offerings, of which the offerers also had a share. There also they were to 'bake the meat-offering, their share of it, which they had from the altar for their own tables, v. 20.' Care was taken that they bare them not out into the outer court, to sanctify the people. Let them not pretend to sanctify the people with this holy flesh, and so impose upon them; or let not the people imagine that by touching those sacred things they were sanctified, and made ever the better, or more acceptable to God. It should seem from Hagg. ii. 12. that there were those who had such a conceit; and therefore the priests must not carry any of the holy flesh away with them, lest they should encourage that conceit. Ministers must take heed of doing any thing to bolster up ignorant people in their superstitions vanities.

CHAP. XLVII.

In this chapter, we have, I. The vision of the holy waters, their rise, extent, depth, and healing virtues; the plenty of fish in them, and an account of the trees growing about the banks of them, v. 1—12. II. An appointment of the borders of the land of Canaan, which was to be divided by lot to the tribes of Israel, and the strangers that sojourned among them, v. 13—23.

1. AFTERWARD he brought me again unto the door of the house: and, behold, waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward: for the forefront of the house stood toward the east, and the waters came down from under, from the right side of the house, at the south side of the altar. 2. Then brought he me out of the way of the gate northward, and led me about the way without unto the outer gate by the way that looketh eastward; and, behold, there ran out waters on the right side. 3. And when the man that had the line in his hand went forth eastward, he measured a thousand cubits, and brought me through the waters; the waters were to the ankles. 4. Again he measured a thousand, and brought me through the waters; the waters were to the knees. Again he measured a thousand, and brought me through: the waters were to the loins. 5. Afterward he measured a thousand; and it was a river that I could not pass over; for the waters were risen, waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over. 6. And he said unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen this? Then he brought me, and caused me to return to the brink of the river. 7. Now, when I had returned, behold, at the bank of the river were very many trees on the one side and on the other. 8. Then said he unto me, These waters issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea; which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed. 9. And it shall come to pass, that every thing that liveth, which moveth, whithersover the rivers shall come, shall live; and there shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall come thither: for they shall be healed; and every thing shall live whither the river cometh. 10. And it shall come to pass, that the fishers shall stand upon it, from En-gedi even unto En-eglaim; they shall be a place to spread forth nets: their fish shall be according to their kinds, as the fish of the great sea, exceeding many. 11. But the myriads thereof, and the marshes thereof, shall not be healed: they shall be given to salt. 12. And by the river, upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed: it shall bring forth new fruit according to its months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary; and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine.

This part of Ezekiel's vision must so necessarily have a mystical and spiritual meaning, that from hence we conclude the other parts of his vision have a mystical and spiritual meaning also; for it cannot be applied to the waters brought by pipes into the temple for the washing of the sacrifices, the keeping of the temple clean, and the carrying off of those waters, for that would be to turn this pleasant river into a sink or common sewer. That prophecy, Zech. xiv. 8. may explain it, of living waters, that shall go out from Jerusalem, half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea. And there is plainly a reference to this in St.
John's vision of a pure river of water of life, Rev. xxxii. 1. That seems to represent the glory and joy, which is grace perfected. This here seems to represent the grace and joy, which is glory begun. Most interpreters agree, that these waters signify the gospel of Christ, which went forth from Jerusalem, and spread itself into the countries about, and the gifts and powers of the Holy Ghost which accompanied it, and by virtue of which the spread itself far, and produced strange and blessed effects. Ezekiel had walked round the house again and again, and yet did not till now take notice of those waters; for God makes known his mind and will to his people, not at once, but by degrees. Now observe, 1. The rise of these waters. He is not put to trace the streams to the fountain, but he forsee them, instead of(Acts 21. 19.) Waters issued out from the threshold of the house eastward, and from under the right side of the house, the south side of the altar. And again, (v. 2.) There ran out waters on the right side; signifying, that from Zion should go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem, Isa. ii. 3. There it was that the Spirit was poured out upon the apostles, and endured them under persecution; and it was there the first time that these waters were to all nations. In the temple first they were to stand, and preach the words of this life, Acts v. 20. They must preach the gospel to all nations, but must begin at Jerusalem. Luke xiv. 24. But that is not all; Christ is the Temple, he is the Door, from him those living waters flow out of his heart; not only to be as the well of water which springs up, Johniv. 14. And it is by believing in him that we receive from him rivers of living water; and this shake he of the Spirit, John vii. 38. 39. The original of these waters was not above ground, but they sprang up from under the threshold; for the fountain of a believer's life is a mystery, it is hid with Christ in God, Col. iii. 3. Some observe that they came forth on the right side of the house, to intimate that gospel-blessings are right-hand blessings. It is also an encouragement to those who attend at Wisdom's gates, at the posts of her doors, who are willing to lie at the threshold of God's house, as David was, that they lie at the fountain-head of comfort and grace; the very entrance into God's word gives light and life, Ps. lxxxix. 37. The fountain of Zion, All my springs are in thee, Ps. lxxvi. 7. They came from the side of the altar, for it is in and by Jesus Christ, the great Altar, (who sanctifies our gifts to God,) that God has blessed us with spiritual blessings in holy, heavenly places. From God as the Fountain, in him as the Channel, flows the river, which makes glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High, Ps. lxxxvi. 4. But observe how much the blessedness and joy of glorified saints in heaven exceed those of the best and happiest saints on earth; here the streams of our comfort arise from under the threshold; there they proceed from the throne, the throne of God and of the Lamb, Rev. xxxii. 1. The prophet now gives the outline of these waters. They flowed forth eastward, (v. 3.) toward the east country, (v. 8.) so for they were directed. The prophet and his guide followed the stream as it ran down from the holy mountains, and when they had followed it about a thousand cubits, they went over across it, to try the depth of it, and it was to the ankles, v. 5. Then they walked along on the bank of the river on the other side, a thousand cubits more, and then, to try the depth of it, they waded through it the second time, and it was up to their knees, v. 4. They walked along by it a thousand cubits more, and then forded it the third time, and then it was up to their middle; the waters were to the loins. They then walked a thousand cubits further, and attempted to repass it the fourth time, but found it impracticable; the waters were risen, by the addition either of brooks that fell into it above ground, or by springs under ground, so that they were waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over, v. 5. Note, (1.) The waters of the sanctuary are running waters, as those of a river, not standing waters, as those of a pond. The gospel, when it was first preached, was like a plain brook, but it is now a stream broader, the soul is still pressing forward; it is an active principle, plus ultra—onward still, till it comes to perfection. (2.) They are increasing waters. This river, as it runs constantly, so, the further it goes, the fuller it grows. The gospel-church was very small in its beginnings, like a little purling brook; but by degrees it came down to the ankles, to the knees, many men and women are added to it daily, till the church of God consists of a great tree. The gifts of the Spirit increase by being exercised, and grace, where it is true, is growing like the light of the morning, which shines more and more to the perfect day. (3.) It is good for us to follow these waters, and go along with them. Observe the progress of the gospel in the world, observe the progress of the work of grace to the heart; attend the motions of the blessed Spirit, and walk after them, under a divine guidance, as Ezekiel did here. (4.) It is good to be often searching into the things of God, and trying the depth of them; not only to look on the surface of these waters, but to go to the bottom of them as far as we can; to be often digging, often diving, into the mysteries of the gospel, to discover what is hidden, that we may be intimately acquainted with these things. (5.) If we search into the things of God, we shall find some things very plain and easy to be understood, as the waters that were but to the ankles; others more difficult, and which require a deeper search, as the waters to the knees, or the loins; and some quite beyond our reach, which we cannot penetrate into, or come at, but, deep as those things be, we shall be washed with those things before we proceed to that which is dark and hard to be understood; it is good to take our work before us. 3. The extent of this river; It issues toward the east country, but from thence it either divides itself into several streams, or fetches a compass, so that it issues down into the desert, and so goes into the sea, either into the Dead sea, which lay south-east, or the sea of Tiberias, which lay north-east, or the Great sea, which lay west, v. 8. This was accomplished when the gospel was preached with success throughout all the regions of Judea and Samaria, (Acts. vii. 1.) and afterward the nations about; may, and those that lay most remote, even in the midst of the sea, were filled with grace and glory by it. The sound of it went forth to the end of the world; and the enemies of it could no more prevail to stop the progress of it than that of a mighty river. 4. The healing virtue of this river. The waters of the sanctuary, wherever they come and have a free course, will be found a wonderful restorative. Blessing brooks will be turned into ponds and lakes. The lake of Sodom, that standing monument of divine vengeance, even those waters shall be healed, (v. 8.) shall become sweet, and pleasant, and healthful. This intimates the wonderful and blessed change that the gospel would make, wheresoever it came in its power; as great a change, in respect both of character and condition, as the turning of the-
Dead sea into a fountain of gardens. When children of wrath became children of love, and those that were dead in trespasses and sins, were made alive, then this was fulfilled. The gospel was as that salt which Elisha cast into the spring of the waters of Jericho, with which he healed them, 2 Kings ii. 20, 21. Christ coming into the world to be its Physician, sent his gospel as the great medicine, the Pana-pharmos; there is in it a remedy for every malady. When they hear the word of God, it shall be as springwaters to them that are thirsty, and rivers of waters to them that be weary; such as the word of God is to them that hear it. Thus the ten rivers come, they make things to live, (v. 9.) both plants and animals; they are the water of life, Rev. xxii. 1, 17. Christ came, that we may have life, and for that end he sends his gospel; every thing shall live whither the river comes. The grace of God makes dead sinners alive, and living saints lively; every thing is made fruitful and flourishing by it. But its effect is as it is received, and as the mind is prepared and disposed to receive it; for, (v. 11.) with respect to the marshes and miry places thereof, that are in the midst of their own sinfulness, and will not be healed or settled in the moisture of their own righteousness, and think they need no healing, their doom is, they shall not be healed; the same gospel which to others is a savour of life unto life, shall be the occasion of their disciples, which do not believe, they shall be given to salt, to perpetuate barrenness, Deut. xxix. 23. They that will not be watered with the grace of God, and made fruitful, shall be abandoned to their own hearts' lusts, and left for ever unfruitful. He that is filthy, let him be filthy still. Never fruit grow on thee any more for ever. They shall be given to salt, to be monuments of divine justice, as Lot's wife, that was turned into a pillar of salt, to serve as a witness. 5. The great plenty of fish that should be in this river; every living, moving thing shall be found here, shall live here, (v. 9.) shall come on and prosper, shall be the best of the kind, and shall increase greatly, so that there shall be a very great multitude of fish, according to their kinds, as the fish of the great sea, exceeding many. There shall be as great plenty of the river-fish, and as vast shoals of them, as there is of salt-water fish, v. 10. There shall be great numbers of Christians in the church, and those multiplying like fishes in the rising generations, and the dew of their youth. In the creation, the waters brought forth the fish abundantly, (Gen. i. 20, 21.) and they still live in and by the waters that produced them; so believers are begotten by the word of God, John iii. 5. (Acts xiv. 16.) that river of God, by it they live, from it they have their sanctuary and subsistence; in the waters of the sanctuary they are as in their element, out of them they are as fish upon dry ground; so David was, when he thirsted and panted for God, for the living God. Where the fish are known to be in abundance, thither will the fishermen flock, and there they will cast their nets; and therefore, to increase the diminishing of these waters, and their being made every way useful, it is here foretold that the fishermen shall stand upon the banks of this river, from En-gedi, which lies on the border of the Dead sea, to Esron, another city, which joins to that sea, and all along shall spread their nets. The Dead sea, which before was shunned as noisome and noxious, shall be frequented; gospel-grace makes these barren places which were once unprofitable and good for nothing, to become serviceable to God and man. 6. The trees that were on the banks of this river; many trees on the one side and on the other (v. 7.) made the prospect very pleasant and agreeable to the eye; the shelter of these trees also would be a convenience for the fishery. But that is not all; (v. 12.) they are trees for meat, and the fruit of them shall not be consumed, for it shall produce fresh fruit every month. The leaf shall be for medicine, and it shall not fade. This part of the vision is copied out into St. John's vision very exactly, (Rev. xxi. 2.) where, on either side of the river, is said to grow the tree of life, which yielded her fruit every month, and the leaves were for the healing of the nations. Christians are supposed to be these trees; ministers especially; trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, (Isa. lxi. 3.) set by the rivers of water, the waters of the sanctuary, (Ps. i. 3.) grafted into Christ the Tree of life, and by virtue of their union with him made trees of life too, rooted in him, Col. ii. 7. There is a great variety of these trees, through the diversity of gifts with which they are endued by that one Spirit who works all in all. They grow on the bank of the river, for they keep close to holy ordinances, through them derive from Christ sap and virtue. They are fruit-trees, designed, as the fig-tree and the olive, with their fruits to honour God and man, Judg. ix. 9. The fruit thereof shall be for meat, for the lips of the righteous feed many. The fruits of their righteousness are one way or other beneficial. The very leaves of these trees are for medicine, for bruises and sores, marg. God, as their profession were as their fruits, as well as with their charitable actions, which are as their fruits, do good to those about them, they strengthen the weak, and bind up the broken-hearted. Their cheerfulness does good like a medicine, not only to themselves, but to others also. They shall be enabled by the grace of God to persevere in their goodness and usefulness; their leaf shall not fade, or lose its medicinal virtue, having not only life at their root but sap in all their branches; their profession shall not wither, (Ps. i. 3.) neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed; they shall not lose the principle of their fruitfulness, but shall still bring forth fruit in old age, to show that the Lord is upright, Ps. xcvii. 14, 15. Or, The reward of their fruitfulness shall abide for ever; they bring forth fruit that shall abound to their account in the great day, fruit to life eternal; that is indeed fruit which shall not be consumed. They bring new fruit according to their months, some in one month, and others in another; so that still there shall be one or other found to serve the glory of God for the purpose he designs. Or, Each one of them shall bring forth fruit monthly, which denotes an abundant disposition to fruit-bearing; they shall never be weary of fruit, the great channel of grace, that there shall be a perpetual spring and summer. And the reason of this extraordinary fruitfulness is, because their waters issued out of the sanctuary; it is not to be ascribed to any thing in themselves, but to the continual supplies of divine grace, with which they are watered every moment, (Isa. xxvii. 3.) for whoever planted them, it was that which gave the increase. 13. Thus saith the Lord God, This shall be the border whereby ye shall inherit the land, according to the twelve tribes of Israel: Joseph shall have two portions. 14. And ye shall inherit it, one as well as another; concerning the which I lifted up my hand to give it unto your fathers; and this land shall fall unto you for inheritance. And this shall be the border of the land toward the north side, from the great sea, the way of Hethlon, as men go to Zedad; 16. Hamath, Berothah, Sibraim, which is between the border of Damascus and the bor.
order of Hamath; Hazar-hatticon, which is by the coast of Hauran. 17. And the border from the sea shall be Hazar-enan, the border of Damascus, and the north northward, and the border of Hamath. And this is the north side. 18. And the east side ye shall measure from Hauran, and from Damascus, and from Gilead, and from the land of Israel by Jordan, from the border unto the east sea. And this is the east side. 19. And the south side southward, from Tamar even to the waters of strife in Kadesh, the river to the great sea. And this is the south side southward. 20. The west side also shall be the great sea from the border, till a man come over against Hamath. This is the west side. 21. So shall ye divide this land unto you according to the tribes of Israel. 22. And it shall come to pass, that ye shall divide it by lot for an inheritance unto you, and to the strangers that sojourn among you, which shall beget children among you; and they shall be unto you as born in the country among the children of Israel; they shall have inheritance with you among the tribes of Israel. 23. And it shall come to pass, that in what tribe the stranger sojourneth, there shall ye give him his inheritance, saith the Lord God.

We are now to pass from the affairs of the sanctuary to those of the state; from the city to the country.

1. The land of Canaan is here secured to them for an inheritance; (v. 14.) I lifted up mine hand to give it unto your fathers, promised it upon oath to them and their posterity. Though the possession had been a great while discontinued, yet God has not forgotten his oath which he swore to their fathers. Though God's providences may for a time seem to contradict his promises, yet the promise will certainly take place at last, for God will be ever mindful of his covenant. I lifted up mine hand to give it, and therefore it shall without fail fall to you for an inheritance. Thus the heavenly Canaan is sure to all the seed, because it is what God who cannot lie has promised.

2. It is here circumscribed, and the bounds and limits of it are fixed, which they must not pass over to encroach upon their neighbours, and which their neighbours shall not break through to encroach upon them. We had such a draught of the borders of Canaan, when Joshua was to put the people in possession of it, Numb. xxxiv. 1, &c. That begins with the salt sea in the south, goes round and ends there. This begins with Hamath about Damascus in the north, and so goes round and ends there, v. 20. Note, It is God that appoints the bounds of our habitation; and his Israel shall always have cause to say that the lines are fallen to them in pleasant places. The lake of Sodom is here called the east sea, for, it being healed by the waters of the sanctuary, it is no more to be called a salt sea, as it was in Numb. xxxiv. 4.

3. It is here ordered to be divided among the tribes of Israel, reckoning Joseph for two tribes, to make up the number of twelve, when Levi was taken out to attend the sanctuary, and had his lot adjoining to that; (v. 13, 21.) Ye shall inherit it one as well as another, v. 14. The tribes shall have an equal share, one as much as another. As the tribes returned out of Babylon, this seems unique, because some tribes were much more numerous than the other, and indeed the most were of Judah and Benjamin, and very few of the other ten tribes; but as the twelve tribes stand, in type and vision, for the general church, the Israel of God, it was very equal, because not the number of each tribe, but the equal inheritance of each tribe, was the mind of the prophet in this vision.

4. The strangers which sojourn among them, which shall beget children, and be built up into families, and so help to people their country, shall have inheritance among the tribes, as if they had been native Israelites, (v. 22, 23.) which was by no means allowed in Joshua's division of the land. This is an act for a general naturalization, which would be done in the latter times of the kingdom, not those only of their own nation and religion, but those, whatever they were, that had an opportunity of showing kindness to, because from them they would be willing to receive kindness. It would likewise invite strangers to come and settle among them, and put themselves under the wings of the Divine Majesty. But it certainly looks at gospel-times, when the particular wall between Jew and Gentile was taken down, and both put upon a level before God, both made one in Christ, in whom there is no difference, Rom. x. 12. This land was a type of the heavenly Canaan, that better country, (Heb. xi. 16.) in which believing Gentiles shall have a blessed lot, as well as believing Jews, Isa. vi. 3.

CHAP. XLVIII.

In this chapter, we have particular directions given for the distribution of the land, of which we had the metes and bounds assigned in the foregoing chapter. 1. The portions of the twelve tribes, seven to the north of the sanctuary, (v. 1.) and five to the south, v. 23. 24. The allotment of land for the sanctuary, and the priests, (v. 8. 11.) for the Levites, (v. 12. 14.) for the city, (v. 15. 26.) and for the prince, v. 21. 22. Much of this we had before, ch. xlviii. III. A plan of the city, its gates, and the new name given to it, (v. 30. 33.) which seals up and concludes the vision and prophecy of this book.

1. Now these are the names of the tribes. From the north end to the coast of the way of Hethlon, as one goeth to Hamath, Hazar-enan, the border of Damascus northward, to the coast of Hamath, (for these are his sides east and west,) a portion for Dan. 2. And by the border of Dan, from the east side unto the west side, a portion for Asher. 3. And by the border of Asher, from the east side even unto the west side, a portion for Naphtali. 4. And by the border of Naphtali, from the east side unto the west side, a portion for Manasseh. 5. And by the border of Manasseh, from the east side unto the west side, a portion for Ephraim. 6. And by the border of Ephraim, from the east side even unto the west side, a portion for Reuben. 7. And by the border of Reuben, from the east side unto the west side, a portion for Judah. 8. And
by the border of Judah, from the east side unto the west side, shall be the offering which they shall offer of five and twenty thousand reeds in breadth, and in length as one of the other parts, from the east side unto the west side: and the sanctuary shall be in the midst of it. 9. The oblation that ye shall offer unto the Lord shall be of five and twenty thousand in length, and of ten thousand in breadth. 10. And for them, even for the priests, shall be this holy oblation; toward the north five and twenty thousand in length, and toward the west ten thousand in breadth, and toward the east ten thousand in breadth, and toward the south five and twenty thousand in length: and the sanctuary of the Lord shall be in the midst thereof. 11. It shall be for the priests that are sanctified of the sons of Zadok, which have kept my charge, which went not astray when the children of Israel went astray, as the Levites went astray. 12. And this oblation of the land that is offered shall be unto them a thing most holy, by the border of the Levites. 13. And over against the border of the priests the Levites shall have five and twenty thousand in length, and ten thousand in breadth: all the length shall be five and twenty thousand, and the breadth ten thousand. 14. And they shall not sell of it, neither exchange, nor alienate the first-fruits of the land: for it is holy unto the Lord. 15. And the five thousand that are left in the breadth, over against the five and twenty thousand, shall be a profane place for the city, for dwelling, and for suburbs; and the city shall be in the midst thereof. 16. And these shall be the measures thereof; the north side four thousand and five hundred, and the south side four thousand and five hundred, and on the east side four thousand and five hundred, and on the west side four thousand and five hundred. 17. And the suburbs of the city shall be toward the north two thousand and fifty, and toward the south two thousand and fifty, and toward the east two thousand and fifty, and toward the west two thousand and fifty. 18. And the residue in length, over against the oblation of the holy portion, shall be ten thousand eastward, and ten thousand westward: and it shall be over against the oblation of the holy portion; and the increase thereof shall be for food unto them that serve the city. 19. And they that serve the city shall serve it out of all the tribes of Israel. 20. All the oblation shall be five and twenty thousand by five and twenty thousand: ye shall offer the holy oblation four-square, with the possession of the city. 21. And the residue shall be for the prince, on the one side and on the other of the holy oblation, and of the possession of the city over against the five and twenty thousand of the oblation toward the east border, and westward over against the five and twenty thousand toward the west border, over against the portions for the prince: and it shall be the holy oblation; and the sanctuary of the house shall be in the midst thereof. 22. Moreover, from the possession of the Levites, and from the possession of the city being in the midst of that which is the prince’s, between the border of Judah and the border of Benjamin, shall be for the prince. 23. As for the rest of the tribes, from the east side unto the west side, Benjamin shall have a portion. 24. And by the border of Benjamin, from the east side unto the west side, Simeon shall have a portion. 25. And by the border of Simeon, from the east side unto the west side, Issachar a portion. 26. And by the border of Issachar, from the east side unto the west side, Zebulun a portion. 27. And by the border of Zebulun, from the east side unto the west side, Gad a portion. 28. And by the border of Gad, at the south side southward, the border shall be even from Tamar unto the waters of strife in Kadesh, and to the river toward the great sea. 29. This is the land which ye shall divide by lot unto the tribes of Israel for inheritance, and these are their portions, saith the Lord God.

We have here a very short and ready way taken for the dividing of the land among the twelve tribes, not so tedious and so far about as the way that was taken in the morning time. There is danger of spiritual and heavenly blessings there is not that danger of murmuring and quarrelling that there is in the participation of temporal blessings. When God gave to the labourers every one his penny, those that were uneasy at it, were soon put to silence with, May I not do what I will with my own? And such is the equal distribution here among the tribes. In this distribution of the land, we may observe,

1. That it differs very much from the division of it in Joshua’s time, and agrees not with the order of their birth, or their blessing by Jacob or Moses. Simeon here is not divided in Jacob, nor is Zebulun a haven of ships; a plain intimation that it is not so much to be understood literally as spiritually; though the mystery of it is very much hidden from those times old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new. The Israel of God is cast into a new method.

2. That the tribe of Dan, which was last provided for in the first division of Canaan, (Josh. xix. 40.) is first provided for here, v. 1. Thus in the gospel, the last shall be first, Matth. xix. 30. God, in the dispensations of his grace, does not follow the same method that he does in the dispositions of his providence. But Dan had now his portion thereabouts where he had only one city before, northward, on the border of Damascus, and furthest of all from the sanctuary, because that tribe had revolted to idolatry.
3. That all the ten tribes, which were carried away by the king of Assyria, as well as the two tribes, which were long after carried to Babylon, have their allotment in this visionary land: which some think had its accomplishment in the particular persons and families of those tribes which returned with Judah and Benjamin, of which we find many instances in Ezra and Nehemiah; and it is probable that there were those two tribes, who were carried away at several times, which are not recorded; and the Jews having Galilee, and other parts, that had been the possessions of the ten tribes, put into their hands, in common with them, they enjoyed them. Grothus says, If the ten tribes had repented, and returned to God, as the chief fathers of Judah and Benjamin did, and the priests and Levites, (Ezra i. 5.) they should have tared as those two tribes did, but they forfeited the benefit of this glorious prophecy by sin. However, we believe it has its designed accomplishment in the establishment and enlargement of the gospel-church, and the happy settlement of all those who are Israelites indeed, in the sure and sweet enjoyment of the privileges of the new covenant, in which there is enough for all, and enough for all.

4. That every tribe in this visionary distribution had its particular lot assigned it by a divine appointment; for it was never the intention of the gospel to pluck up the hedge of property, and lay all in common; it was in a way of charity, not of legal right, that the first Christians had all things common; (Acts ii. 44.) many precepts of the gospel supported, as every man should know his own. And we must not only acknowledge, but acquiesce in the hand of God, appointing us our lot, and be well pleased with it, believing it fittest for us. He shall choose our inheritance for us, Ps. lvii. 4.

5. That the tribes lay contiguous; by the border of one tribe was the portion of another, in all a row, in exact order, so that, like stones in an arch, they fixed, and strengthened, and wedged in, one another. Behold, how good and how pleasant a thing it is for brethren thus to dwell together! It was a figure of the communion of churches and saints under the gospel-government; thus though they are many, yet they are one, and should hold together in holy love and mutual assistance.

6. That Reuben, which before lay at a distance being next contiguous to Judah, and next but one to the sanctuary: for the scandal he lay under, for which he was told he should not excel, began by this time to wear off. What has turned to the reproach of any person or people, ought not to be remembered for ever, but should at length be kindly forgotten.

7. That the sanctuary was in the midst of them; there were seven tribes to the north of it, and the Levites, the prince's, and the city's portion, with that of five tribes more, to the south of it; so that it was, as it ought to be, in the heart of the kingdom, that it might diffuse its benign influences to the whole, and might be the centre of their unity. The tribes that lay most remote from each other, would meet there in a mutual acquaintance and fellowship. Those of the same parish or congregation, though dispersed, and having no occasion otherwise to know each other, yet by meeting stedfastly to worship God together should have their hearts knit to each other in holy love.

8. That where the sanctuary was, the priests were: For them, even for the priests, shall this holy oblation be, v. 12. As, on the one hand, this speaks honour and comfort to ministers, that all is given for their support and maintenance is reckoned a holy oblation to the Lord, so it speaks their duty, which is, that since they are appointed and maintained for the service of the sanctuary, they ought to attend continually to this very thing; to reside on their curtes. Those that live upon the altar must serve at the altar, not take the wages to themselves, and devote the work upon others; but how can they serve the altar, his altar they live upon, if they do not live near it?

9. Those priests had the priests' share of these lands, that had approved themselves faithful to God in time of trial, (v. 11.) It shall be the greater part of Zadok, who, it seems, had signalized themselves in some critical juncture, and went not astray when the children of Israel, and the other Levites, went astray. God will put honour upon them, and has special favours in reserve for them, who keep their integrity in times of general apostasy. They are swimming upward, and so they will find at last, that are swimming against the stream.

10. The land which was appropriated to the ministers of the sanctuary, might by no means be alienated. It was in the nature of the first-fruits of the land, and was therefore holy to the Lord; and though the priests and Levites had both the use of it, and the inheritance of it to them and their heirs, yet they might not sell it, or exchange it, v. 14. It is a privilege to so convert that to other uses, which is dedicated to God.

11. The land allotted for the city and its suburbs is called a profane place, (v. 15.) or common; not but that the city was a holy city above other cities, for the Lord was there, but, in comparison with the sanctuary, it was a profane place. Yet it is too often true in the worst sense, that great cities, even those which have in them the names of God, and where the chief priests and Levites are, are profane places, and it ought to be sadly lamented. It was the complaint of old, From Jerusalem is profaneness gone forth into all the land, Jer. xxiii. 15.

12. The city is made to be exactly four-square, and the suburbs extending themselves equally on all sides, as the Levites' cities did in the first division of the land, (v. 16, 17.) which never being literally fulfilled in any city, intimates that it is to be understood spiritually of the beauty and stability of the gospel-church, that city of the living God, which is formed according to the wisdom and counsel of God, and is made firm and immovable by his promise.

13. Whereas, before, the inhabitants of Jerusalem were principally of Judah and Benjamin, in whose tribe it lay, now, the head city lies near in the particular lot of any of the tribes, but they that serve the city, and have office in it, shall serve it out of all the tribes of Israel, v. 19. The most eminent men must be picked out of all the tribes of Israel, for the service of the city, because many eyes were upon it, and there was great resort to it from all parts of the nation, and from other nations. They that live in the city are said to serve the city, for, wherever we are, we must study to be serviceable to the place, some way or other, according as our capacity is. They must not come out of the tribes of Israel to the city, to take their ease, and enjoy their pleasures, but to serve the city, to do all the good they can there, and in so doing they would have a good influence upon others.

14. Care was taken that those who applied themselves to public business in the city, as well as in the sanctuary, should have an honourable, comfortable maintenance: lands are appointed, the increase thereof shall be food unto them that serve the city, v. 18. Who goes a warfare at his own charges? Magistrates, that attend the service of the state, as is as ministers, that attend the service of the church, should have all due encouragement and support in so doing: and for this cause they we tribute also.

15. The prince had a lot for himself, suited to
the dignity of his high station; (v. 21.) we took an account of it before, ch. xlv. He was seated near the altar, which was the tent-covenant of Israel, and near the city, where the thrones of judgment were, that he might be a protection to both, and might see that the duty of both was carefully and faithfully done; and herein he was a minister of God for good to the whole community. Christ is the church's Prince, that defends it on every side, and creates a defence; nay, he is himself a Di-fence upon all its glory, and compasses it with his favour.

Lastly, As Judah had his lot next the sanctuary on one side, so Benjamin had, of all the tribes, his lot nearest it on the other side; which honour was reserved for them who adhered to the house of David and the temple at Jerusalem, when the other ten tribes went astray from both. It is enough if treachery and apostacy, upon repentance, be pardoned, but constancy and fidelity shall be rewarded and preferred.

30. And these are the going out of the city on the north side, four thousand and five hundred measures. 31. And the gates of the city shall be after the names of the tribes of Israel: three gates northward; one gate of Reuben, one gate of Judah, one gate of Levi. 32. And at the east side four thousand and five hundred: and three gates; and one gate of Joseph, one gate of Benjamin, one gate of Dan. 33. And at the south side four thousand and five hundred measures: and three gates; one gate of Simeon, one gate of Issachar, one gate of Zebulun. 34. At the west side four thousand and five hundred, with their three gates; one gate of Gad, one gate of Asher, one gate of Naphtali. 35. It was round about eighteen thousand measures: and the name of the city from that day shall be, The Lord is there.

We have here a further account of the city that should be built for the metropolis of this glorious land, and to be the receptacle of those who should come from all parts to worship in the sanctuary adjoining. It is no where called Jerusalem, nor is the land which we have had such a particular account of the dividing of, any where called the land of Canaan; for the old names are forgotten, to intimate that the old things are done away, behold, all things are become new.

Now, concerning this city, observe here,

1. We are to understand of its outlets, and the grounds belonging to it, for its several conveniences; each way its appurtenances extended 4,500 measures, 18,000 in all, v. 35. But what these measures were, is uncertain; it is never said, in all this chapter, whether so many reeds, as our translation determines, by inserting that word, (v. 8.) each reed containing six cubits and a span, (ch. xlv. 3.) and with the measures annexed appear with the measuring-reed in his land of that length, if he did not measure with that, except where it is expressly said he measured by cubits? Or whether, as others think, it is so many cubits, because those are mentioned, ch. xlv. 2. and ch. xlvii. 5. Yet that makes me incline rather to think that where cubits are not mentioned, it may be inferred so many lengths of the measuring-reed. But those who understand it of so many cubits, are not agreed whether he meant by that the common cubit, which was half a yard, or the geometrical cubit, which, for better expediency, is supposed to be mostly used in surveying lands of this sort, some say, contained six cubits: and about three cubits and a half, so making 1000 cubits the same with 1600 paces, that is, an English mile. But our being left at this uncertainty, is an intimation that these things are to be understood spiritually, and that what is principally meant, is, that there is an exact and just proportion observed by Infinite Wisdom in modelling the gospel-church, through which they cannot discern, we shall when we come to heaven.

2. The number of its gates. It had twelve gates in all, three on each side; which was very agreeable when it lay four-square; and these twelve gates inscribed to the twelve tribes. Because the city was to be served out of all the tribes of Israel, (v. 19.) it was fit that each tribe should have its gate; and Levi being here taken in, to keep to the number twelve, Ephraim and Manasseh are made one in Joseph, v. 32. On the north side were the gates of Reuben, Judah, and Levi, v. 31. On the east, the gates of Joseph, Benjamin, and Dan, v. 32. On the south, the gates of Simeon, Issachar, and Zebulun, v. 33. And on the west, the gates of Gad, Asher, and Naphtali. Whether the gate in St. John's vision, the new Jerusalem (for so the holy city is called there, though not here) has twelve gates, three of a side, and on them are written the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel, Rev. xxi. 12, 13. Note, Into the church of Christ, both militant and triumphant, there is a free access by faith for all that come of every tribe, from every quarter. Christ has opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. Whoever will may come, and take of the water of life, of the tree of life, freely.

3. The name given to this city; From that day, when it shall be new-erected according to this model, the name of it shall be, not as before, Jerusalem—the vision of peace, but, which is the original of that, and more than equivalent to it, Jehovah Shammah—The Lord is there, v. 35. This intimated,

(1.) That the captives, after their return, should have manifest tokens of God's presence with them, and his residence among them, both in his ordinances and in his providences; they should have no occasion to ask, as their fathers did, Is the Lord among us, or is he not? For they shall see, and know, that he is with them, and that they shall have him to look upon, and he will be as good as his word. Though their troubles were many and threatening, they were like the bush, which burned, but was not consumed, because the Lord was there. But when God departed from their temple, when he said, Migwanum vine—Let us go hence, their house was soon left unto them desolate. Being no longer his, it was not much longer theirs.

(2.) That the gospel-church should like wise have the presence of God in it, though not in the Shechinal, as of old, yet in a token of it no less sure, than of his Spirit. Where the gospel is faithfully preached, gospel-ordinances duly administered, and God worshipped in the name of Jesus Christ only, it may truly be said, The Lord is there; for faithful is he that has said it, and he will be as good as his word.

I answer, not only that we have admitted and believed the same, and that we live and move and have our being even to the end of the world. The Lord is there in his church to rule and govern it, to protect and defend it, and graciously to accept and own his sincere worshippers, and to be nigh unto them in all that they call upon him for. This should engage us to keep close to the communion of saints, for the Lord is there; and then whether else shall we go to worship God? Nay, it is only to be nigh unto him, that he will be as good as his word. I answer, not only that we have admitted and believed the same, and that we live and move and have our being even to the end of the world. The Lord is there in his church to rule and govern it, to protect and defend it, and graciously to accept and own his sincere worshippers, and to be nigh unto them in all that they call upon him for. This should engage us to keep close to the communion of saints, for the Lord is there; and then whether else shall we go to worship God? Nay, it is only to be nigh unto him, that he will be as good as his word.
(3.) That the glory and happiness of heaven should consist chiefly in this, that the Lord is there. St. John's representation of that blessed state does indeed far exceed this, in many respects. That is all gold, and pearls, and precious stones; it is much larger than this, and much brighter, for it needs not the light of the sun. But in making the presence of God the principal matter of its bliss, they both agree. There the happiness of the glorified saints is made to be, that God himself shall be with them, (Rev. xxii. 3.) that he who sits on the throne shall dwell among them, Rev. vii. 15. And here it is made to crown the bliss of this holy city, that the Lord is there. Let us therefore give all diligence to make sure to ourselves a place in that city, that we may be for ever with the Lord.

EZEKIEL, XLVIII.