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ORTON'S

EXPOSITION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

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VOL. VI.



*Johnell Krebs.*

AN

EXPOSITION

OF

THE OLD TESTAMENT,

WITH DEVOTIONAL AND PRACTICAL

REFLECTIONS

FOR THE USE OF FAMILIES.

BY THE LATE REV. JOB ORTON, S.T.P.

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SIX VOLUMES.

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WITH

THE LIFE OF THE AUTHOR,

BY ANDREW KIPPIS, D.D. F.R.S.,

AND AN INDEX OF MATTERS CONTAINED IN THE NOTES AND  
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AN EXPOSITION  
OF  
THE OLD TESTAMENT.

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THE BOOK OF  
THE PROPHET EZEKIEL.

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INTRODUCTION.

EZEKIEL was one of those Jews who were carried captive to Babylon along with Jehoiakim, or Jeconiah, king of Judah. In the fifth year of this captivity, the era from which he dates his prophecies, he began his office, which he exercised about twenty-one years. The commencement of this period falls on the year before Christ 595, and thirty-four years after Jeremiah had begun his office; so that the last eight years of Jeremiah coincide with the first eight of Ezekiel. The chief design of this prophet seems to be, to convince his fellow-captives in Babylon that they were mistaken in supposing that their brethren who still remained in Judea were in happier circumstances than they; and for this purpose he describes the terrible judgments impending over that country; the final destruction of Jerusalem, both city and temple; and inveighs against those heinous sins which were the cause of such calamities

More particularly, the first three chapters contain a glorious appearance of God to the prophet; who is commissioned to his office, with instructions and encouragements in the discharge of it. The prophet then, to chap. xxv., displays the sins and punishments of the Jews, especially of those left in Judea, by several apt visions and similitudes. From thence to chap. xxxiii. he foretells the destruction of several neighbouring nations who were enemies to the Jews; and from chap. xxxiii. to xl. censures the sins, murmurings, and hypocrisy, of the Jewish captives in Babylon; with which, however, he intersperses promises of their approaching deliverance, together with intimations of a still

more glorious redemption in future times under the Messiah.—The nine last chapters contain a remarkable vision of the structure of a new temple and a new polity for Israel and strangers ; applicable, in the first instance, to the return from the Babylonian captivity, but, in its ultimate sense, to the glory and prosperity of the universal church of Christ in future times.

The style of Ezekiel is generally very bold and majestic. It is a peculiar species of the sublime, to which some have given the name of the Terrible\*. From the nature of his visions, however, more than from his language, he is often obscure, especially toward the beginning and end of his Book. The freedom with which he reproved his countrymen for their idolatry is said to have cost him his life, the fate of many of the prophets †.

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## CHAPTER I.

This chapter contains an account of the glorious appearance of God to Ezekiel, to give him a commission to execute the prophetic office among the captives in Babylon, and to fill his mind with a holy awe of God. This vision was before the destruction of the temple.

1 **N**OW it came to pass in the thirtieth year, (*either from the birth of the prophet, or the renewal of the covenant in Josiah's time, when the people were put on another trial*), in the fourth [month,] in the fifth [day] of the month, as I [was] among the captives by the river of Chebar, *with a colony of captives who were settled on the banks of that river, which runs into the Euphrates,* [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, *or, to Ezekiel, the son of Buzi the priest,* in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar ; and the hand of the LORD was there upon him ; *there was a deep, sensible influence of God's Spirit upon him, and then he saw a remarkable vision: not any external object, but an impression upon his mind.*

\* Bp. Newcome says, Nahum sounds the trumpet of war : Hosea is sententious ; Isaiah sublime ; Jeremiah pathetic ; Ezekiel copious ; and this diffusiveness of manner in mild and affectionate exhortation, this vehement enlarging on the guilt and consequent sufferings of his countrymen, seems wisely adapted to their capacities and circumstances, and must have had a forcible tendency to awaken them from their lethargy.—PREFACE, p. 28.

† Smith.

4 And I looked, and, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself, and a brightness [was] about it, and out of the midst thereof as the colour of amber, out of the midst of the fire; *a cloud, containing a large globe of fire, came rolling along from the north, to intimate the destruction of Israel, which was to come from an enemy out of the north, that is, the Chaldeans.* 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; *an erect, and, in the main, a human figure, and were intelligent creatures, designed to represent the angels as executing God's purposes; they are called Cherubims, chap. x. 1.* 6 And every one had four faces, and every one had four wings. 7 And their feet [were] straight feet; 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; *they had all the same appearances and proportions, wings, feet, and hands, to represent their steadiness, dexterity, and despatch in business.* 9 Their wings [were] joined one to another; they turned not when they went; they went every one straight forward; *this intimates the sincerity of their intentions, the unanimity of their designs, and the constancy of their pursuit.* 10 As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man, *to signify their understanding and prudence,* and the face of a lion, on the right side, *to denote their strength and courage:* and they four had the face of an ox on the left side, *to show their unwearied diligence and application;* they four also had the face of an eagle, *to intimate their quickness and penetration.* 11 Thus [were] their faces: and their wings [were] stretched upward; two [wings] of every one [were] joined one to another, and two covered their bodies; *they were in a flying posture, to denote their readiness in executing the divine commands.* 12 And they went every one straight forward: whither the spirit was to go, *the Spirit of God, the principle of all their motions,* they went; [and] they turned not when they went. 13 As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance [was] like burning coals of fire, [and] like the appearance of lamps: it went up and down among the living creatures; and the fire was bright, and out of the fire went forth lightning. 14 And the living creatures ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning, *to denote their diligence and activity, and that, when they had despatched their business, they*

*returned to their proper station.* 15 Now as I beheld the living creatures, behold, one wheel upon the earth by the living creatures, with his four faces. 16 The appearance of the wheels and their work [was] like unto the colour of a beryl, *a gem of a bluish green*: and they four had one likeness: and their appearance and their work [was] as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel; *like four double wheels, or two circles in a sphere; and yet they are spoken of as one wheel, to intimate, that the designs of Providence, however complicated, are perfectly harmonious.* 17 When they went, they went upon their four sides: [and] they turned not when they went; *they kept one straight course and unbent line of direction, to show that the schemes of Providence are always tending to their accomplishment.* 18 As for their rings, they were so high that they were dreadful, *to denote the vast designs of Providence*; and their rings [were] full of eyes round about them four; *they were all directed by perfect wisdom and foresight.* 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 creatures [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; *they were all subordinate to the first cause, the same principle of understanding animated them; and this is designed to intimate the alacrity with which all the instruments of providence carry on its designs.* 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; *it was so bright as to dazzle the eye.* 23 And under the firmament [were] their wings straight, the one toward the other: every one had two, which covered on this side, and every one had two, which covered on that side, their bodies. 24 And when they went, I heard the noise of their wings, like the noise of great waters, as the voice of the Almighty, the voice of speech, as the noise of an host; *or, the sound of their speech was as the sound of an host*: when they stood, they let down their wings, *hearkening and waiting for the word of command.* 25 And there was a voice from the firmament, that [was] over their heads, when they stood, [and] had let down their wings.

26 And above the firmament that [was] over their heads [was] the likeness of a throne, *of which these angels were the supporters*, 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 ; *Christ, the representative of the invisible God, as the Shekinah or representation of the divine glory in the temple, and higher than the angels.* 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 as it were the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about, *a bright golden flame.* 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 ; *like a rainbow, to represent God's dealing with his people in a covenant way, and his faithfulness to his promises.* This [was] the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD ; *it was only the appearance of the likeness of God's glory ; which is added, to prevent our entertaining unworthy conceptions of it, as if there were in reality any such shapes and form.* And when I saw [it,] I fell upon my face, *quite overcome with the splendour,* and I heard a voice of one that spake.

## REFLECTIONS.

1. WE may here reflect how little the happiness of man depends upon his particular circumstances in life. Ezekiel was now among captives in Babylon ; but there God visited him with this glorious vision. The godly may be involved in the same calamity as others ; the difference between them and the ungodly is not in events, but in the frame and temper of their spirits. Thus when we are at a distance from our friends, or in any disagreeable circumstances, we may have access to the throne of grace, and there God can visit us with manifestations of his favour. Let it be our care to secure his love and friendship, then we may be easy and happy any where.

2. What awful and glorious thoughts of God ! should this grand representation excite in our minds. Undoubtedly it was designed to impress the prophet's heart with an holy reverence of God. Here we see his glorious attendants, his power over all creatures, his majesty and splendour in the heavens ; his providence managing the affairs of the world ; his vast, yet harmonious, designs ; and Christ sitting upon the throne, directing and superintending

all. We should dwell especially on the leading truth here suggested, that all things are under the conduct of a wise, overruling providence. Its designs may be deep and wonderful; but are all wise and good. Let us reverence this glorious Being, trust in him, and wait for the clearing up of the mysteries of providence, till mortality be swallowed up of life.

3. Let us learn to imitate the holy angels in their principles, and the manner in which they serve God. This vision represents to us their attention, simplicity, prudence, dexterity, activity, unanimity, despatch, and perseverance, in executing the divine commands. They make no mistakes, mind no diversions, but are always intent, cheerful, speedy, and unwearied. These are the glorious examples we are to pursue. Have we not need to pray, that God's will may be done by us and others on earth, as it is done in heaven; and long for that day, when we shall be like the angels of God in heaven? In the mean time,

4. Let it be our concern and ambition to secure an interest in him as our covenant God and Father in Christ. The rainbow about the throne speaks comfort to us, amidst all the splendour and majesty which adorn it. Without this, the glory would only dazzle and confound us. Let us rejoice in God, as our covenant God; that Jesus, our head and saviour, presides over the affairs of the church and the world; that in him all the promises are Yea and Amen. May we be interested in him, *whose mercy is from everlasting to everlasting, and whose truth endureth throughout all generations.*

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## CHAP. II. and CHAP. III. 1—15.

The prophet, having been overwhelmed with the glorious vision in the preceding chapter, is here strengthened and comforted; he is then commissioned to his office, and encouraged to be faithful, though he must be the messenger of displeasing tidings.

1 **AND** he said unto me, Son of man\*, stand upon thy feet, *put thyself in a posture of attention*, 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; *being*

\* Some suppose this was an honourable title; others think it a diminutive one, and that there was something in Ezekiel's circumstances which might render it proper.

*overpowered by the vision, he could not rise without help, as was the case with Daniel and St. John.* 3 And he said unto me, Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that have 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 ; *or, although they be of an hardened countenance and a firm heart ; though they have cast off all shame, and grown worse and worse,* I do send thee unto them ; and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God ; *thou shalt speak in my name, and produce my authority.* 5 And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, (for they [are] a rebellious house,) yet shall know that there hath been a prophet among them ; *the wicked shall know it by the fulfilment of my threatenings, and the righteous by the performance of my promises.*

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 ; *though thou exposest thyself to injurious and malignant treatment :* be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they [be] a rebellious house ; *who, though they cannot persecute thee in other ways while they are captives in Babylon, will do it by angry and spiteful words and looks.* 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 ; *do not refuse to go, be not backward to deliver the most disagreeable messages :* open thy mouth, and eat that I give thee ; *that is, receive my instructions, commit them to memory, meditate upon and digest them.*

9 And when I looked, behold, an hand [was] sent unto me ; and, lo, a roll of a book [was] therein ; 10 And he spread it before me : and it [was] written within and without ; *a parchment roll, written on both sides :* and [there was] written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe ; *terrible judgments on the people for their sins, and no mercy to the Jews of that generation.*

CHAP. III. 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 ; *I readily complied with God's command.* 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; *it was a pleasure to be called and employed as a prophet of God, to converse with him, and see the visions of the most High; though the word was bitter, considering the opposition it met with, and the sad consequences of their despising the message.*

4 And he said unto me, Son of man, go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with my words unto them. 5 For thou [art] not sent to a people of a strange speech and of an hard language, *that would have been an additional burden,* [but] to the house of Israel; 6 Not to many people of a strange speech and of an hard language, whose words thou canst not understand. Surely, had I sent thee to them, they would have hearkened unto thee; *thou wouldst not have found equal obstinacy among them.* 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, *or, of a firm forehead,* 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; *I have given thee courage in proportion to their obstinacy and impudence.* 10 Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, all my words that I shall speak unto thee receive in thine heart, and hear with thine ears. 11 And go, get thee to them of the captivity, unto the children of thy people, and speak unto them, and tell them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear. 12 Then the spirit took me up, and I heard behind me a voice of a great rushing, [saying.] Blessed [be] the glory of the LORD from his place; *from heaven, to which the vision was returning; or, by us his ministering spirits, who are now in the place where his glory dwelleth.* 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; *with a variety of sentiments; my heart was full of fear about the message, and concern for the desolations of Israel, and warmed with the favour that God had shown me: but the hand of the LORD was strong upon me; urging and empowering me to execute my commission.*



## REFLECTIONS.

1. It is desirable that the Spirit of God should accompany the word ; and we have reason to expect it will, if we seek it. Ezekiel was commanded to stand up and hear, and the Spirit set him upon his feet. The Spirit of God is the source of all our strength and ability, and will enable us to perform what he commands us to do, if we attempt it. Then we may expect that God will speak to our souls, when we are ready to do whatever he commands. Let us therefore hear his word with reverence and a resolution to comply with it ; and then *he will teach us to profit by it.*

2. God's prophets have need of great diligence, courage, and patience, in delivering their messages to men. It is their duty to study the scriptures, to receive and digest them ; to turn them first into the nourishment of their own souls, then to explain and inculcate them faithfully and boldly. They will find much difficulty in this work ; many rebellious persons among those whom they are to address, who will give them a worse reception than infidels, and try every method to frighten and discourage them. But they must do their duty, whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear. It is no wonder that there are many who will not hear them, for they will not hear God himself. But their obedience to difficult commands, and faithful perseverance in their duty, will be attended with such comfort, as will make them abundant amends for their labours, notwithstanding the bitterness and reproach they meet with.

3. How detestable is the character of Israel, as here described, and how careful should we be to avoid it. All who despise the word of God, and will not regard what he says, are really against him ; and they are prejudiced against ministers, and do not heed what they say, because they are prejudiced against God and his law. But at length they shall know, to their confusion, that God hath sent them ; that they spake in his name, and by his authority ; and shall find what a dreadful thing it is to despise his messengers. The word of God, like the prophet's roll, is full of lamentation and mourning and woe, against those who make light of it. May we act a contrary part ; hear what God saith, by his word and ministers ; esteem his word more than our necessary food, receive

it with appetite, meditate upon it, and digest it. Thus shall we be nourished up in the word and doctrine, and at length be permitted to see and enjoy the glory of the Lord in his heavenly place. *Amen!*

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### CHAP. III. 15, to the end.

The prophet's glorious vision and general commission we have had before; he is here shown the importance of being faithful; has another vision, and further directions.

15 **THEN** I came to them of the captivity at Tel-abib, *a place high up in the country, north of Babylon, but on the same river,* that dwelt by the river of Chebar, and I sat where they sat, and remained there astonished among them seven days; *observing their disposition, and waiting for a revelation from God, and I was astonished at their pride and corruption, and the terrible judgments coming upon the nation.* 16 And it came to pass at the end of seven days, *probably on their sabbath,* 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; *I appoint thee a sentinel to foresee and foretell dangers\**. 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 thine hand; *he shall die, shall be punished for his sins; the neglect of the prophet shall not be any excuse for him, since he had understanding and warning other ways; but the prophet shall be accountable for the loss of his soul, as a man is for a murder to which he is accessory.* 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; *art clear from guilt.* 20 Again, When a righteous [man] doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumbling-block before him, *a temptation to sin, and particularly to idolatry, which he might have resisted,* he shall die: because, *or, although*

\* The prophets are often so represented, that foreseeing the evil coming on many, they might warn them of their danger and duty. They were often sent to particular persons; but ministers now can only give general warnings; except where there is sufficient information to ground a particular address upon.

thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he hath done shall not be remembered; *his former righteousness shall not avert the punishment*; but his blood will I require at thine hand. 21 Nevertheless if thou warn the righteous [man,] that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he is warned; also thou hast delivered thy soul.

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; *the place where thou art, not being so proper for the discoveries now to be made unto 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 thine house; *probably to denote the siege of Jerusalem.* 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; *that is, for some space of time I will withhold revelations from thee*: for they [are] a rebellious house. 27 But when I speak with thee, *that is, give thee a commission,* and I will open thy mouth, *thou shalt have free liberty to speak,* and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; He that heareth, let him hear; and he that forbeareth, let him forbear *at his peril*: for they [are] a rebellious house; *and this is the last warning I will give them.*

## REFLECTIONS.

1. **HERE** is a description of the difficulty and importance of the ministerial office; it is that of watchmen; a necessary, but a laborious and dangerous, office. To observe the state of their people, to give them plain and faithful notice of their danger and duty, whether they be pleased or displeased; this is hard work; the guilty will blame them if they are faithful, and God will condemn them if they are unfaithful. It will be a satisfaction to them to have done their duty and delivered their own souls; and

\* Mr. Henry interprets this, that he should be bound as a criminal or a mad-man, a disturber of the public peace; but it may be rendered, 'bonds shall be upon thee;' and may be explained by the next verse.

in many cases this is all the satisfaction they must expect. With this awful passage before them,

2. Ministers should solemnly warn the wicked in the name of God. He saith, *the wicked in general shall die in their iniquity.* He saith to every wicked man, without distinction, *thou shalt surely die if thou turnest not from the wickedness of thy way and heart.* Yet there is room for repentance; it is intimated, that if he turn, he shall live. This warning I give you; and were I to neglect to do this, it would be no excuse for your wickedness; you will die notwithstanding; for your consciences warn you, the providences of God warn you: therefore, *turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die, O house of Israel?*

3. Ministers should warn the righteous against apostacy. It is here plainly supposed, that a righteous man may turn from his righteousness and practise iniquity; and therefore they have great need to be cautious and watchful. Men first leave the paths of righteousness, and then commit iniquity; thus they provoke God to lay a stumbling-block in their way; to withhold restraining grace, and give them up to their own hearts' lusts. By this means they will lose what they have wrought, and perish in their iniquities; their knowledge, professions, learning, and enjoyments, will but aggravate their condemnation. *Take heed, therefore, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.*

4. Frequent retirement from the world is necessary, in order to our enjoying communion with God. The prophet was to leave his countrymen, and retire into the plain, where God promised to talk with him; to shut up himself in his house, where God visited him. Thus ministers must find time, much time, for study, and give themselves to reading, meditation, and prayer, that they may be fitted for public worship: and their friends who hinder them, by expecting long and unnecessary visits, injure both their ministers, their fellow-christians, and themselves. It is the duty of all so to contrive their affairs, that they may have time for religious retirement. Those who have a great deal of worldly business, (more than they need have if they were not earthly-minded,) and those who pursue a round of visiting and amusement, can enjoy but little of God, and the comforts of religion; and they lose the noblest pleasures that a rational creature can enjoy upon earth.

5. See how easily and justly God can punish men for their contempt of his word and ministers. The people slighted the prophet

and his message, and therefore God silenced him for a while, that he should not reprove them. This intimates, that reproof is adapted to make men better; but that when it has often been given in vain, it is just in God to withhold it. The wicked look upon this as a privilege; but, in the judgment of God, it is a calamity and a punishment. God may see fit to remove or silence those faithful ministers whose services are despised and neglected. And if all their labours and pains are thrown away upon such an insensible people, he may resolve to let them alone, and deprive them of the best means of improvement and happiness. Upon the whole, this is the comfort of faithful ministers, that *they are unto God a sweet savour in them that perish, and in them that are saved: to the former they are a savour of death, and to the latter of life unto life: and who is sufficient for these things?*

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#### CHAPTER IV.

The prophets taught by actions as well as by words; thus Ezekiel delineates Jerusalem, and lays siege to it, as a type of the manner in which the Chaldean army should surround that city. The inhabitants there encouraged the captives to hope for a return; and they did hope for it, as long as Jerusalem was safe; and began to repent of their submitting to the Babylonians. But this vision was designed to overthrow their confidence. I call it a vision, for I have no doubt but it passed in vision, and was afterwards rehearsed to the captives; or if it happened while the prophet was dumb, it was written down and communicated to them.

1 **THOU** also, son of man, take thee a tile, and lay it before thee, and portray upon it the city, [even] Jerusalem; *draw a picture of a besieged city, and enemies surrounding it with warlike engines:* 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, or plate, to show the violence of the attack made by the Chaldeans, and the obstinate resistance of the Jews, 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 upon thy left side, and lay the iniquity of the house of Israel upon it: [according] to the number of days that thou shalt lie upon it thou shalt bear their iniquity. 5 For I have laid upon thee the years of their iniquity, according to the number of the days, three hundred and ninety days, *or years, a day being put for a year*: 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, *look with a stern and angry countenance*, and thine arm [shall be] uncovered, *to denote the vigour and activity with which the Chaldeans would attack, and the Jews resist them*, and thou shalt prophesy against it. 8 And, behold, I will lay hands upon thee, and thou shalt not turn thee from one side to another, till thou hast ended the days of thy siege; *to denote the continuance of the siege, that the Chaldeans should be fixed and fastened there, as by bonds, till the city was taken*.

9 Take thou also unto thee wheat and barley, and beans, and lentiles, and millet, and fitches, *the coarsest as well as the finest grain, to denote the famine during the siege*; 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; *only ten ounces, because of the great scarcity*: from time to time shalt thou eat it. 11 Thou shalt drink also water by measure, the sixth part of an hin, *about a pint*: 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; *thou shalt have no other fuel, and be glad to eat any thing, though it be ever so unclean*. 13 And

\* By lying in this posture in his own house, some part of every day for three hundred and ninety days, he was to represent how long God would bear with them; or presignify the punishment they should bear for so long iniquity; there being just three hundred and ninety years from the time of Jeroboam's setting up the calves in Dan and Bethel, to the migration of the last gleanings of those tribes in the captivity of Zedekiah: and as their sins and provocations continued so many years, so it seems by this place that the siege of Jerusalem continued about so many days, for to this also do these days refer, as appears by ver. 9.

† It being forty years from the time their covenant was renewed in Josiah's reign (which was a great aggravation of their sins) to their destruction by the Chaldeans; that is, three hundred and ninety years for the whole house of Israel, the twelve tribes, and forty more for the house of Judah. It is very remarkable that the siege lasted about three hundred and ninety days. It continued indeed for eighteen months, but was raised for five months, by the Egyptians coming to their help, so that there was thirteen months' close siege.

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 until now have I not eaten of that which dieth of itself, or is torn in pieces; neither came there abominable flesh into my mouth; *I begged to be excused from the circumstance of dressing my food with human dung, supposing that this would have been a ceremonial pollution.* 15 Then he said unto me, Lo, I have given thee cow's dung, *a common fuel*, 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, *the support of life*, in Jerusalem, and they shall eat bread by weight, and with care; and they shall drink water by measure, and with astonishment; *they shall be astonished and distressed for want of more provisions, and eat with care and anxiety about the next meal:* 17 That they may want bread and water, and be astonished one with another, and consume away, *they shall look upon one another like persons astonished, and waste and perish by degrees*, for their iniquity.

## REFLECTIONS.

1. It is particularly displeasing to God, when persons break their solemn covenant engagements. The prophet was to bear the sins, that is, declare the punishment of the whole house of Israel for three hundred and ninety years, and of Judah's for forty years, that is, from the time their covenant was renewed. God took notice of that great national transaction, and it was a high aggravation of their sins that they acted contrary to their engagements. Let us learn caution from hence; *remember the vows of God that are upon us*, especially those entered into at the Lord's supper, on the baptism of our children, or any more secret vows; and be careful to pay them; lest we fall under the displeasure of the faithful, holy, and almighty God.

2. Good men are afraid of the least thing or circumstance that may have a tendency to defile their souls. The prophet even scrupled (unnecessarily indeed) what God had commanded him; and appealed to him, that he had not from his youth up polluted his soul with any abominable thing. This suggests another lesson of caution to us, that we do not allow ourselves in any thing by which we may contract guilt and pollution, though it may not be

expressly forbidden by the law of God. It is very desirable to be able, with the prophet, to appeal to God, that we have not only complied with the lesser matters of the law, but have abstained even from the appearance of evil. It is a great satisfaction to be able to say, that we have done this from our youth up, even until now; that we have been conscientious in the smallest matters; and never knowingly violated the dictates of conscience; and it will be a powerful argument against temptation to say, 'Hitherto my soul hath not been polluted, therefore I will not now comply with temptation.

3. God's indulgence to the prophet's scruples suggests how much allowance ought to be made to tender consciences. There was nothing unlawful in what God commanded him to do; but as the prophet scrupled it, God dispensed with that circumstance. Such a regard all, and especially those in authority, ought to show to tender consciences, (though perhaps they might be too scrupulous), that they do not tempt, much less force, them to do what they judge or suspect to be evil: and it would have been happy for the world, if in the constitution of christian churches, men had shown that tenderness to their brethren, which God here showed to the prophet; though his commands were undoubtedly wise and good.

4. How great a blessing is peace to the world, and how thankful should we be for it. This is a lesson which many parts of this, as well as of Jeremiah's, prophecy suggest. The horrors of war, and the misery of besieged places, are strongly painted out by these prophetic visions; and it would be painful to humanity to descant further upon them. What inhuman creatures are those who delight in war! how ungrateful are they to God! How cruel are they to their fellow subjects and fellow men, who are not thankful for the return of peace, but had rather that the miseries of war should be continued, than their partial, proud, selfish desires should not be gratified! All these miseries came upon the Jews for their pride and ingratitude. To prevent the like, let us accept with all thankfulness the peace which God hath given us: and render to him according to the benefits done to us; lest he bring upon us the horrors of war in all their perfection.

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## CHAPTER V.

This chapter carries on the argument of the former, and shows the general destruction of the Jews after the siege.

1 **AND** thou, son of man, take thee a sharp knife, take thee a barber's razor, and cause [it] to pass upon thine head and upon thy beard: then take thee balances to weigh, and divide the [hair\*.] 2 Thou shalt burn with fire a third part in the midst of the city, when the days of the siege are fulfilled, *which denotes the famine and pestilence, and the burning of the city:* and thou shalt take a third part, [and] smite about it with a knife, or sword, *to intimate that a third part of the inhabitants should perish by the sword in their sallies and in the storming of the city:* and a third part thou shalt scatter in the wind; and I will draw out a sword after them, *that is, they shall be driven into captivity.* 3 Thou shalt also take thereof a few in number, and bind them in thy skirts; *a remnant shall be preserved.* 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; *which may refer to those who continued in the land under Gedaliah, and afterwards went into Egypt and were destroyed, (2 Kings xxv. 22. Jeremiah xlii. 43, 44.), so that the whole land of Israel was desolate.*

5 Thus saith the Lord God; This [is] Jerusalem, *this signifies Jerusalem:* I have set it in the midst of the nations and countries [that are] round about her; *I have set her in an honourable station, and intended her as a blessing to other nations by being a pattern of religion.* 6 And she hath changed my judgments into wickedness, *perverted them to colour over her 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; *they have sinned against clearer light and stronger convictions.* 7 Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Because ye multiplied *your idolatry and wickedness,*

\* The Jewish writers observe, with great propriety, that this could not be really done, because Ezekiel was a priest, and it was contrary to the law for priests to shave their heads and cut off their beards; it was therefore only a vision. The head, signifies Jerusalem; the hair, the great number of its inhabitants; the razor, the king of Babylon; and the balances, the exactness of God's judgments.

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; *have not been so faithful, constant, and zealous in the worship of your God, as they have been of theirs;* 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; *I will bring my heaviest judgments on your capital city.* 9 And I will do in thee that which I have not done, and whereunto I will not do any more the like, because of all thine abominations; *your punishment shall be greater and of longer continuance than those of other nations, (which may include even their present calamities.)* 10 Therefore the fathers shall eat the sons in the midst of thee, and the sons shall eat their fathers; and I will execute judgments in thee, and the whole remnant of thee will I scatter into all the winds. 11 Wherefore, [as] I live, saith the LORD GOD; Surely because thou hast defiled my sanctuary with all thy detestable things, and with all thine abominations, therefore will I also diminish [thee;] neither shall mine eye spare, neither will I have any pity.

12 A third part of thee shall die with the pestilence, and with famine shall they be consumed in the midst of thee: and a third part shall fall by the sword round about thee; and I will scatter a third part into all the winds, and I will draw out a sword after them *in Egypt and other countries which they shall flee to.* 13 Thus shall mine anger be accomplished, and I will cause my fury to rest upon them, and I will be comforted; *to speak after the manner of men, I shall be pleased when I have rid the earth of those who are the scandal of it:* and they shall know that I the LORD have spoken [it] in my zeal, when I have accomplished my fury in them; *that I have done it out of a just concern for my honour and authority.* 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, *that they may take warning by my judgments,* 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, *wild beasts shall destroy many of those who flee or are carried captive*, and they shall bereave thee; and pestilence and blood, or a *bloody pestilence and plague, that shall destroy multitudes*, shall pass through thee; and I will bring the sword upon thee. I the LORD have spoken [it.] *This is often repeated, to show how certainly and dreadfully these threatenings should be accomplished.*

## REFLECTIONS.

1. LET us reflect on the variety and the rectitude of the divine judgments. How many arrows are in his quiver; what a variety of ways he has of punishing a wicked people; they can fly to no place but where he can reach and destroy them. Yet still he weighs his judgments in the balance; all are exactly determined; there is a due proportion in his corrections, according to men's guilt. Particular judgments are allotted to particular persons; and they are lighter or heavier, according to their crimes. The consideration of this is comfortable, when we think of the calamities of nations, that they are all determined, regulated, and bounded, by unerring wisdom and perfect righteousness.

2. When God distinguishes persons by his providential bounties, it is with a view to make them more useful to the world. When he gives them wealth or learning, and fixes them in stations of rank and power, it is that they may be more serviceable to others. Thus Jerusalem was set in the midst of the nations round about, that it might enlighten and reform them. Let men of wealth and honour, and all heads of families, remember this, that God raises them above others, that they may be so much the more generous and charitable, and do more by their fortunes, influence, and example, to promote his glory, and support the interest of religion: and that *to whom much is given, of them much will be required.*

3. Those who abuse religious advantages, are here described as the worst of men. God (v. 7.) reproves the Israelites as being worse than heathens; for they had not changed their gods, nor neglected the worship of them, as Israel had done. Those who have enjoyed a divine revelation and yet continue ignorant and vicious, will be condemned by the sober, virtuous lives of the heathens, who have it not: and when those who have enjoyed a good education, been often and seriously instructed and warned by their parents and ministers, who have at the same time set them a good example, when such forsake God and his service,

and turn his judgments into wickedness, their guilt is highly aggravated; they are more vicious than others, do more dishonour to religion, and mischief to society; and God will execute judgments upon them in anger and fury.

4. The calamities which God brings upon nations, are intended to be warnings to others. When Jerusalem was made desolate, and the Israelites were destroyed and scattered by God's judgments, it was to be an instruction to the nations round about; for he expects that *when his judgments are in the earth, the nations should learn righteousness*. In like manner, when he punishes particular transgressors, he warns others; and it becomes us *to hear, and fear, and not sin presumptuously*. May we therefore observe his providences, and attend to the designs of them; *come out from among the wicked, and be separate; never partake of their sins, lest we also partake of their plagues*.

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## CHAPTER VI.

We have here the judgment of Israel for their idolatry; yet a remnant shall be saved; and the faithful are exhorted to lament their calamities.

1 **AND** the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 2 Son of man, set thy face toward the mountains of Israel; (*a strong way of upbraiding the people for their inattention and stupidity;*) 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, *as all have been defiled with idolatry*; Behold, I, [even] I, will bring a sword upon you, *the sword of the Chaldeans*, and I will destroy your high places; *either the places where the idols are worshipped, or your fortifications*. 4 And your altars shall be desolate, and your images shall be broken: and I will cast down your slain [men] before your idols; *they shall be slain before the idols, while committing themselves to their protection, to show how unable they are to help their worshippers*. 5 And I will lay the dead carcasses of the children of Israel before their idols; and I will scatter your bones round about your altars, *and thus pollute the places which are esteemed sacred*. 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; *I will make the most stupid sensible of my hand, and own that the punishment was just.*

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, *and to whom the promises made to their fathers shall be fulfilled.* 9 And they that escape of you shall remember me among the nations whither they shall be carried captives, because I am broken with their whorish heart, *or rather, when I have broken and subdued their whorish heart, which hath departed from me, so as to break their marriage covenant with me,* and with their eyes, which go a whoring after their idols, *which are tempted by the fine show which their idols make:* and they shall lothe 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; *they shall see the threatenings accomplished, and that I have not punished them without just cause and a good effect, in bringing them back to God.*

11 Thus saith the LORD GOD; Smite with thine 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; *deliver not prophecies of such tremendous evil in a cold, indifferent manner, but with great seriousness and earnestness, and with gestures of grief and concern.* 12 He that is afar off *from the city and the Chaldeans* shall die of the pestilence; and he that is near shall fall by the sword; *he that is near the city, or to some strong hold, where he thinks to retire, shall be slain before he gets thither;* and he that remaineth and is besieged shall die by the famine: thus will I accomplish my fury upon them. 13 Then shall ye know that I [am] the LORD, when their slain [men] shall be among their idols round about their altars, upon every high hill, in all the tops of the mountains, and under every green tree and under every thick oak, the place where they did offer sweet savour to all their idols. 14 So will I stretch out my hand upon them, and make the land desolate, yea, more desolate than the wilderness toward Diblath, *the worst part of the wilderness,* in all their habitations: and they shall know that I [am] the LORD.

## REFLECTIONS.

1. IT is just in God to make those things our punishment which have been our sin. The idols of the Jews were destroyed by the Chaldeans, who were themselves idolaters; and they were slain before their idols, that their sin might be seen in their punishment, and that those who remained might have a proper conviction of the evil of their ways. Thus if men make money or pleasure their idols, or make a god of their belly, it is just in God to bring poverty, pain, and sickness upon them. This thought should be reflected upon, to prevent our being too fond of any thing which may alienate the heart from God.

2. The design of afflictions is to bring God and sin to remembrance: *that they may remember me and lothe themselves; v. 9.* Afflictions are intended and adapted to recover men's minds to a serious remembrance of God; of his patience with them, and mercy to them; and of the various means he has used to lead them to repentance. They tend to convince men of the evil of sin, to make them abhor their former practices, and themselves for being so stupid as to be seduced into them: and when they duly consider how highly they have provoked God, and grieved the good spirit of his grace, they will lothe themselves; and can hardly forgive themselves, even when they hope that God hath forgiven them. This temper enters into the idea of true repentance; and though it be excited and occasioned by trouble, yet a gracious God will accept it.

3. The dreadful consequences of sin ought to be represented to men with great earnestness. The prophet is directed to smite with his hand, and stamp with his foot, that is, to deliver his message with life and emphasis, and all the marks of deep concern; to show his sense of the importance of the message, and how much his own heart was affected by it. And ministers are still to speak like men in earnest; to use every method of language and gesture that may be likely to awaken and influence the hearts of men. And they must be content to be ridiculed by conceited, captious hearers, if they can but rouse, convert, and edify souls. The authority of their Master, and the importance of their message, require, and will vindicate the most pathetic addresses. *He that winneth souls is wise.*

## CHAPTER VII.

This chapter foretells Judah's desolation, and the great distress of the small remnant that should escape; and the prophet is directed to make a chain, as a type of the captivity, in which both king and people should be led in bonds to Babylon.

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; *the four most distant parts; that is, a total desolation; and so it came to pass, as most of those who were carried captive returned no more.* 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; *the punishment of them shall be manifest to all:* and ye shall know that I [am] the LORD. 5 Thus saith the LORD GOD; An evil, an only evil, *an unmixed, unparalleled evil,* behold, is come. 6 An end is come, the end is come: it watcheth for thee; *it is just ready to seize thee;* behold, it is come. 7 The morning *of that dreadful day* is come upon 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 *not a vain echo and report.* 8 Now I will shortly pour out my fury upon thee, and accomplish mine anger upon thee: and I will judge thee according to thy ways, and will recompense thee for all thine abominations. 9 And mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: I will recompense thee according to thy ways and thine abominations [that] are in the midst of thee; and ye shall know that I am the LORD that smiteth; *not the king of Babylon, he is only my instrument.* 10 Behold the day, behold, it is come: the morning is gone forth; the rod hath blossomed, pride hath budded; *the rod of oppression and wickedness prevails among them, and their pride increaseth.* 11 Violence is risen up into a rod of wickedness: *therefore* none of them [shall remain,] nor of their multitude, nor of any of their's, neither [shall there be] wailing for them; *none of the tyrannical princes and magis-*

*trates, nor of the mob they set on; hardly any shall escape to bewail the calamities of others.* 12 The time is come, the day draweth near: let not the buyer rejoice, nor the seller mourn, for the enemy would soon have torn his property from him: for wrath [is] upon all the multitude thereof, both buyer and seller, rich and poor. 13 For the seller shall not return to that which is sold, although they were yet alive; a young person, who has just sold an inheritance, shall scarcely see an end of the captivity; or if he should return, the land shall be so desolate that he shall not know his own inheritance: for the vision [is] touching the whole multitude thereof, [which] shall not return; neither shall any strengthen himself in the iniquity of his life, that is, in contempt of God's judgments. 14 They have blown the trumpet, even to make all ready; but none goeth to the battle; they are quite dispirited, all their courage is gone: 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.

16 But they that escape of them, for a few, a small remnant 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, unable to fight, unable to fly. 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; marks of confusion, sorrow, and misery. 19 They shall cast their silver in the streets, and their gold shall be removed as an unclean thing; they shall cast it away from them, that they may flee more easily, and take away from their pursuers the temptations to destroy them: 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; shall not procure them necessaries during the siege: because it is the stumbling-block of their iniquity; it occasioned them to commit idolatry and other sins, and was employed in adorning their idols.

20 As for the beauty of his ornament, their beautiful temple, 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; I have removed them far from it, and have destroyed it. 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, *I will wink at what their enemies are doing to it, and turn away my face, as if I did not see them,* and they shall pollute my secret [place:] for the robbers shall pay no regard to its holiness, but shall enter into it, and defile it.

23 Make a chain, to link the captives together that they may be carried away: for the land is full of bloody crimes, of murders committed, or of capital crimes passed by, which the law condemned, and the city is full of violence. 24 Wherefore I will bring the worst of the heathen, the Chaldeans, the greatest idolaters and most cruel oppressors, and they shall possess their houses: I will also make the pomp of the strong to cease; and their holy places, the temple, its courts, and the whole city, 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; their prophets shall be removed or have no comfortable vision, and their wisest men shall be infatuated. 27 The king, who should govern and comfort his people, shall mourn, and the prince, or general, who leads the army, shall be clothed with desolation, and the hands of the people of the land shall be troubled; there shall be a general consternation, none shall be able to help themselves: 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.

## REFLECTIONS.

1. WE are here taught the righteousness of God in his judgments; and that he deals with nations according to their deserts. It is several times repeated in this chapter, *I will recompense them according to their ways and all their abominations.* He brings different calamities on different nations, according to their character. He judges men for *all* their conduct, their *secret* thoughts and the principles on which they act. How careful then should we be of all our ways, that we never forsake the path of righteousness, never turn aside to any crooked ways.

2. We are here shown the vanity of earthly things. Public troubles may arise; the buyer therefore should not rejoice, nor the seller mourn; the seller in that case will have less to lose, and the buyer more anxiety and fear; men may be glad to cast

away that gold and silver, of which they are so fond, to preserve their lives and assist them in flight; and while it is continued, they may be in such circumstances that it will not furnish them with meat and corn. Even in peaceful times such circumstances may arise, that money and estates may be of no benefit, nor afford any comfort: at least a time will certainly come when they cannot profit. Since then the time is short, it becomes those that lose, to mourn as though they lost not; those that buy, to rejoice as though they possessed not; and those that use the world, not to abuse it.

3. How vain is boasting and confidence in the form of godliness, while the power is wanting! The Jews boasted of their magnificent temple, and thought God would never forsake his own palace: but he here declares, *v. 22., My face will I also turn from them, and they shall pollute my secret place, for the robbers shall enter into it, and defile it.* Thus, if men despise or neglect ordinances, God may take them away, and give his professing people to be punished by the heathen, yea by the worst of the heathen. The Jews, in their trouble, sought comfortable visions from the prophets; but as they would not hear what was said to them in God's name, by way of reproof and exhortation, they should have nothing to say to them by way of encouragement. God's ministers can give no comfort in time of trouble to those who have disregarded their admonitions in time of prosperity. The general lesson from the whole is, that the way of righteousness is the only way of safety, peace, and happiness.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

Here begins a section of prophecy, which extends to chap. xii. This contains Ezekiel's vision of jealousy and the chambers of imagery; the scene is at Jerusalem, the time was fourteen months after the first vision; and the design is, to show that the city should not escape, as the captives hoped, and what abominations were done there in the midst of their afflictions.

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 mine house, and the elders of Judah sat before me, *probably to attend worship in the*

*prophet's house, and receive instruction from God, 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, like the appearance in the first vision, chap. i. 27. 3 And he put forth the form of an hand, and took me by a lock of mine 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, and that goeth into the court of the priests; where [was] the seat of the image of jealousy, which provoketh to jealousy; that is, an image or idol set up to rival God in his own temple; thus affronting and provoking him, as the infidelity of a wife does her husband. 4 And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel [was] there, to give authority to the vision and to aggravate Israel's crimes, 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; *it stood by the altar, that the people who came to offer sacrifices to Jehovah might be tempted to offer them to this idol.* 6 He said furthermore unto me, Son of man, seest thou what they do? [even] the great abominations that the house of Israel committeth here, that I should go far off from my sanctuary? *as if he had said, I appeal to thee and to them, whether this be not enough to provoke me, whether I am not as it were driven away from this place, and whether I can in honour inhabit or defend it any longer?* but turn thee yet again, [and] thou shalt see greater abominations, *committed by persons of greater note, and nearer the most holy place.*

7 And he brought me to the door of the court; and when I looked, behold a hole in the wall. 8 Then said he unto me, Son of man, dig now in the wall: and when I had digged in the wall, behold a door; *private back door by which they entered.* 9 And he said unto me, Go in, and behold the wicked abominations that they do here; *do not content thyself with looking through the hole, but go in and take a full survey of their wickedness.* 10 So I went

\* This is a key to other prophecies in this book. He fell into a trance, and had as lively a representation of the following scenes on his mind, as if he had actually seen them; and he related to the people what he saw.

in and saw; and behold every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts *worshipped as gods*, and all the idols of the house of Israel, portrayed upon the wall round about; *a pantheon, or temple, adorned with the images of all their gods.* 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, *one whom the prophet knew*, with every man his censer in his hand; and a thick cloud of incense went up; *these elders, who should have known better and have punished such practices, were the greatest idolaters; and all of them acted as priests.* 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? *or in his bed-chambers; intimating, that besides the things done in the chapel abovementioned, they had little chambers, in imitation of it, in their own houses:* for they say, The LORD seeth us not; the LORD hath forsaken the earth; *therefore we are under no obligations to serve him, but may serve those idols whose worshippers are prosperous.*

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; *and who probably prostituted themselves in honour of their god, and gave themselves up to vile affections\*.*

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, *the court of the priests*, 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; *these were probably priests, who turned their backs on the holy of holies, in contempt of Jehovah, and, like the heathen, worshipped 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,

\* Some suppose Tammuz to be the Osiris of the Egyptians, and the Adonis of the Greeks. Pansamias mentions a chapel in which the women wept for Adonis. Some learned men think that Tammuz, Osiris, Adonis, and Apollo, were all names for the sun; and we have accounts of some feasts celebrated in Greece and Egypt like this.

lo, they put the branch to their nose; or rather, a branch to my wrath; representing God's wrath as fire, to which they, by their sins, added fuel\*. 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 for mercy, [yet] will I not hear them.

## REFLECTIONS.

1. WE here see that God did not leave his people destitute of the means of grace, even in their captivity. It was an instance of his goodness to them, that prophets were among them, to teach, in their own houses, those who would come there to worship. Though banished from the temple, yet they had religious instructions in Babylon. This showed that the presence of God was not confined to the temple, and proves that divine worship may still be lawfully and profitably celebrated in private houses, where there are not other conveniencies; and it will be happy, if men's afflictions teach them to value the word and ordinances of God wherever they are administered.

2. The wickedness of this people is very lamentable. To think of the elders and priests of Israel, amidst the calamities of their country, practising the idolatries of all their neighbours, even in the temple itself, and affronting God in his own house; what can be more monstrous and detestable! How various were the abominations which were here practised, and how just were God's judgments upon them! Let us fear for ourselves. The prophet's vision is too just a description of our own hearts. Some abominations present themselves at first view; but the more narrowly we search, the more and greater we shall discern; which should humble us before God, and make us careful to search out and put away our sins, which are so displeasing to him.

3. The source of iniquity is forgetfulness of the presence and knowledge of God. It is no wonder this people arrived to such a pitch of impiety, when they said, *The Lord seeth us not*. They did it in the dark, that they might keep their places and preserve their characters; thinking, because men did not see that God did not. But no darkness nor shadow of death can conceal us from his eye. He revealed what they did to the prophet, though he was at a great distance from them. May we guard against this error; never think God to be such an one as ourselves, but set him always

\* Bp. Newcome translates it, *Lo, they send forth a scornful noise through their nostrils*.

before us; and remember that *there is a day coming when his righteous judgment shall be revealed, and he will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or evil.*

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## CHAPTER IX.

We had the vision of Israel's wickedness in the former chapter; here is the vision of their ruin, and the preservation of the pious remnant.

1 **H**E, *the majestic person on the throne*, cried also in mine ears with a loud voice, *to engage my attention, and to denote how terrible the judgments should be*, saying, Cause them that have charge over the city to draw near, *or, those that have a charge are drawing near, that is, those who are appointed to avenge me on Jerusalem*, even every man [with] his destroying weapon in his hand. 2 And behold, six men came from the way of the higher gate, which lieth toward the north, *from Babylon, (perhaps referring to the Chaldean army as composed of six nations, for we read of six princes or commanders of it)*, and every man a slaughter weapon in his hand; and one man, *or angel*, among them [was] clothed with linen, *like a priest*; with a writer's inkhorn by his side; and they went in, and stood beside the brasen altar, *because the Jews were to be slain as so many sacrifices to divine justice, and to avenge the pollution of the altar.* 3 And the *Shekinah, or glory of the God of Israel* was gone up from the cherub, *or cherubim*, whereupon he was, to the threshold of the house, *or temple, as departing from it, and to meet the messengers of vengeance, and give them their commission.* And he called to the man clothed with linen, which [had] the writer's inkhorn by his side; 4 And the LORD said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof; *of those who sighed in secret and cried before God; to intimate, that providence would in an extraordinary manner preserve them; some of the pious might be carried captive, some of the wicked might be spared, and perhaps some of the godly might fall; but this was to be the general rule in the conduct of providence; this therefore was first to be done.*

5 And to the others he said in mine hearing, Go ye after him

through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity: Slay utterly old [and] young, both maids, and little children, and women; but come not near any man upon whom [is] the mark, *either to injure or frighten him*; and begin at my sanctuary, *which had been more especially polluted\**. Then they began at the ancient men which [were] before the house; *the priests and elders, who worshipped the sun*, (see chap. viii. 16.) 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, *of which I had a grateful and affectionate sense*, that I fell upon my face, and cried; *I immediately interceded for Israel as God's people, that a remnant might be spared*, 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, *or, wresting of judgment*: for they say, The LORD hath forsaken the earth, and the LORD seeth not; *he takes no notice, will not call us to account*. 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; *they have brought this judgment upon themselves, and I will not remove it*. 11 And, behold, the man clothed with linen, which [had] the inkhorn by his side, reported the matter, saying, I have done as thou hast commanded me, *and have marked them all*.

## REFLECTIONS.

1. How provoking to God are the sins of men, especially those of his professing people. Observe the dreadful expression of this before us; he ordains and commands the instruments of his vengeance *not to have pity; not to scruple to defile the temple itself with the blood of these obstinate offenders*; and declares, that he himself would not pity. He commands them to begin at the sanctuary, to punish the ringleaders and his ministers first. He hates sin in all, but most in those, who by their professions and stations are nearest to him, and have enjoyed the greatest privileges and advantages. This should fill our hearts with a great and constant dread of sin, lest we provoke the most merciful and compassionate of all beings *to have no pity*.

\* There is a reference to this in I Pet. iv. 17. Where judgment is said to begin at the house of God.

2. We are again taught to what most of the impiety of the world is owing, namely, to a forgetfulness of God; *v. 9. Therefore they hardened their hearts in wickedness.* There may be such absurd and impious sentiments in those who are not idolaters; they may forget the perfect knowledge of God, his spotless righteousness, and that he will call them to account for all that they have done. To keep us in the way of duty, let us labour to preserve upon our hearts an habitual sense of God; that he hath not forsaken the earth; but searches our hearts, remembers all our doings, and will bring every work into judgment.

3. We learn the duty of God's people in times of prevailing wickedness, viz., to *keep themselves pure*, and lament the sins of others. Doubtless those good men who were marked did not delight in the sins of others; but rather attempted to reform a wicked age, by their admonitions and good examples. And when nothing else was left for them to do, they lamented their degeneracy before God; cried earnestly to him for mercy toward a guilty land; and, like the prophet, earnestly prayed that if the judgment might not be averted, it might be lightened. Thus it becomes us to act; to behold transgressors with grief; to affect our hearts with that wickedness, which we cannot but see, and which it is not in our power to remove; though every friendly effort should be used, while there is any prospect of success.

4. We see the care that God takes of his servants in times of general calamity. This figurative and beautiful description suggests to us, that *the Lord knoweth them that are his*, however obscure and overlooked, however despised and evil-treated; that he will, if he sees it best, by his providence preserve them; but, if any of them should fall by any general calamity, that he will amply reward their fidelity and zeal in a future state. Let us see to it that we be of this number: for of them it is written, *They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in the day when I make up my jewels.*

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## CHAPTER X.

This chapter is designed to represent to the prophet, and by him to the people, two great calamities that were yet to come upon them, the burning of Jerusalem, and the departure of God's glory from the temple.—The vision is repeated here which he saw at first of the glory of God, his attendant angels, and the administration of his providence.

1 **T**HEN I looked, and, behold, in the firmament that [was] above the head of the cherubims there appeared over them as it were a sapphire stone, as the appearance of the likeness of a throne. 2 And he spake unto the man clothed with linen, and said, Go in between the wheels, [even] under the cherub, and fill thine hand with coals of fire from between the cherubims, and scatter them over the city; *to intimate that the city and temple should be burned.* 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 *as it was coming out of the temple.* 4 Then the glory of the LORD went up, *or, was lifted up* from the cherub, [and stood] over the threshold of the house; and the house was filled with the cloud, and the court was full of the brightness of the LORD's glory. 5 And the sound of the cherubims' wings was heard [even] to the outer court, as the voice of the Almighty God when he speaketh; *that is, like the noise of thunder, as they were now going to execute terrible judgments.* 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 signify his putting the command immediately into execution.*

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 wheel [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 ; *the wheels were animated, and therefore addressed as being capable of obeying the great charioteer ; and they are addressed as one wheel, to intimate the admirable unity of design that runs through all God's works and dispensations.* 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 *to attend the divine glory wherever it went.* 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 ; *one principle of reason and obedience directed them all.* 18 Then the glory of the LORD departed from off the threshold of the house, and stood over the cherubims, *and thus went further from the temple.* 19 And the cherubims lifted up their wings, and mounted up from the earth in my sight : when they went out, the wheels also [were] beside them, and [every one] stood at the door of the east gate of the LORD's house, and the glory of the God of Israel [was] over them above†. 20 This [is] the living creature that I saw under the God of Israel, by the river of Chebar ; and I knew that they [were] the cherubims ; *having, as a priest, seen their form carved in the holy place.* 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.

\* What is here said to have the face of a cherub, has in the first chapter the face of an ox ; from whence it appears probable that a cherub was represented by a winged ox.

† These cherubims were like a splendid chariot, to convey the glory of the Lord away from its ancient residence in the temple ; and accordingly are called, in Chronicles, the chariot of the cherubims that covered the ark.

## REFLECTIONS.

1. LET us endeavour to fill our minds with an holy awe of the majesty and glory of God. To impress the prophet and the people with this, a further view is here given of the grandeur of God, as before represented. Let us view him by faith as seated on a majestic throne, surrounded with an host of bright intelligencies, always ready to execute his commands. Let us think of the admirable wisdom and unity of design, which runs through his operations, however perplexed or contradictory they may appear to us. While we rejoice that *the Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens, and that his kingdom ruleth over all*, let us think of him and worship him with due seriousness and veneration; for *God is greatly to be feared, and to be had in reverence of all them that draw nigh unto him.*

2. We should observe the hand of Providence in the calamities that come upon mankind. The Chaldeans burned the city and temple; but here an angel is represented as scattering fire over them by the command of the Almighty. Whether a town or a house is burned, it is under the direction of Providence: whenever there is evil in a city, *the Lord hath done it*: and it becomes us to revere his power, to adore his justice, to humble ourselves under his righteous hand, and learn wisdom and obedience by what we ourselves or others suffer.

3. How dreadful is the case of any people when the glory of the Lord is taken from them! Its departure from Jerusalem is described by many lively and affecting scenes, especially here. Let us observe the justice of God in removing his presence, when his people had affronted him, and tired out his patience by their idolatry and abominations. Observe also his mercy; he removed by degrees; the cloud of glory came first into the holy place, from the most holy; then to the threshold; then to the court; then to the gates of the court; as if he was loth to remove, and waited to see whether the priests in the temple, or the people in the courts, would take warning, and by repentance and prayer engage his stay. God's ordinances, his gracious presence, the assistances of his Spirit, are the glory of our assemblies; and if we abuse or neglect these, and thus affront him, he will remove; then *the glory is departed*, and nothing good remains. The shape of religion,

the form of godliness, without its life and spirit, is unprofitable and destructive. *These things were written for our admonition; and woe unto us if God depart from us!*

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## CHAPTER XI.

Contains matter of terror to the wicked presumptuous Jews at Jerusalem, and of comfort to the captives in Babylon.

1 **M**OREOVER the spirit lifted me up, and brought me unto the east gate of the LORD'S house, which looketh eastward; *where the glory of the Lord stood, (ch. x. 19), and where the court of justice was kept:* and behold at the door of the gate five and twenty men; among whom I saw Jaazaniah the son of Azur, and Pelatiah the son of Benaiah, princes of the people, *who were chief instruments in causing the city to hold out, and in preventing its surrender.* 2 Then said he unto me, Son of man, these [are] the men that devise mischief, *though they pretend the public good, and give wicked counsel in this city, counsel to continue in idolatry and rebellion.* 3 Which say, [It is] not near; let us build houses; *the desolation threatened is not near, though it should come at last; let us therefore build houses, and enjoy our fortunes and pleasures: 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; *though you have said them secretly to one another, or only indulged the thoughts in your own mind.* 6 Ye have multiplied your slain in this city, and ye have filled the streets thereof with the slain; *those who have been or shall be destroyed in your city by your foolishly holding out, shall be impaled to you as your slain, as well as those whom you have actually destroyed by unjust edicts.* 7 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Your

\* This is a reference to Jeremiah's prophecy, ch. i. 13; he had seen a boiling pot, as an emblem of the city all in a fermentation; these profane men made a banter of this; they compared themselves to meat boiling in a pot, and intimated that they were yet very strong, and should bear a great deal of boiling before they came to pieces.

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; *the dead shall be all that are left in the city, you shall neither be secure nor shall you die there, but be reserved for another punishment.* 8 Ye have feared the sword, and pretended that as a reason why you did not surrender; and I will bring a sword upon you, saith the Lord GOD. 9 And I will bring you out of the midst thereof, *where you think yourselves most secure,* and deliver you into the hands of strangers, and will execute judgments among you; *the strangers whom you feared, and to whom you would not submit, shall overcome 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; *the city (the caldron) as well as you shall be destroyed; which was fulfilled when Nebuchadnezzar condemned and executed the princes and nobles of Israel in Riblah, on the borders of Israel, Jer. lii. 9, 10.* 12 And ye shall know that I [am] the LORD: for ye have not walked in my statutes, neither executed my judgments, but have done after the manners of the heathen that [are] round about you; *have practised their abominable idolatries, and therefore you cannot wonder that I should forsake you.*

13 And it came to pass, when I prophesied, that Pelatiah the son of Benaiah died; *he seemed to me in vision to be struck dead; a certain sign that his death would quickly follow.* 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? *wilt thou take them all away by the stroke of thy vengeance?*

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, *or thy fellow captives,* and all the house of Israel wholly, *even all of them,* [are] they unto whom the inhabitants of Jerusalem have said, Get you far from the LORD: unto us is this land given in possession: *they looked upon the captives as apostates, because they had surrendered to the Chaldeans; they thought that God had disowned them, because they were in a strange land, and that themselves were the only people of God, because they were left at Jerusalem.* 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, *suitcd to their number and circum-*

stances, in the countries where they shall come; *they shall enjoy my presence, have opportunities of converse with me in Babylon, though far from the Jewish sanctuary.* 17 Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will even gather you, *as a precious commodity*, from the people, and assemble you, *as an honourable body*, out of the countries where ye have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel, *you shall have the grant and promise of it.* 18 And they shall come thither, *their posterity shall possess it*, and they shall take away all the detestable things thereof, and all the abominations thereof from thence; *their captivity shall be the means of curing them of idolatry, which it actually did.* 19 And I will give them one heart, *entirely for God, and not divided*, and I will put a new spirit within you, *new dispositions, or, an excellent spirit*; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh, *a serious, humble, tender, and obedient heart*: 20 That they may walk in my statutes, *or moral law*, and keep mine ordinances, *the ordinances of religious worship*, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God; *I will renew my covenant with them, though they now seem to be cast off.* 21 But [as for them] whose heart walketh after the heart of their detestable things and their abominations, *who love idolatry as well as they formerly did*, I will recompense their way upon their own heads, saith the Lord GOD; *I will show my justice upon such, and there needs nothing more to make them 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; *the Shekinah came first out of the most holy place into the holy, then to the threshold, then to the court, then to the gate of the house, and then to the mount of Olives; thus it gradually departed, and showed that their glory would soon be gone.*

24 Afterwards the spirit took me up, and brought me in a vision by the Spirit of God into Chaldea, to them of the captivity. So the vision that I had seen went up from me. 25 Then I spake unto them of the captivity all the things that the LORD had showed me; *I faithfully related what God had shown to me* \*.

\* This would be an encouragement to those captives who might repent of their surrendering and going to Babylon, while Jerusalem held out; it would teach them not to be troubled at the insults and sneers of their brethren; nor to expect

## REFLECTIONS.

1. ONE source of the obstinacy and ruin of sinners is, their supposing that the judgments of God are at a distance. *It is not near us, &c.* Thus men now believe that though death and judgment will come, they are not near. *They put afar off the evil day,* and therefore say, *Let us build houses,* follow the world, enjoy our pleasures, and defer religion; we shall have time enough to repent, reform, and be wise hereafter. By this means the arguments taken from the solemnity and awful consequences of death and judgment lose much of their force. But the folly of their conduct is most apparent, for they may be near, *even at the door;* and it is the duty of ministers to prophesy against such triflers, and in the plainest and most rousing terms to give them warning.

2. Let us impress this thought upon our hearts, that *God knows the things that come into our minds, every one of them:* not only actions and words, but thoughts; even the most transient; what men think and intend, what impressions are upon their imaginations, what pains are taken to cherish good thoughts, and to banish bad ones. And as he knows, so he remembers and will judge them. May we then *keep our hearts with all diligence: let no vain imaginations lodge within us:* but let us approve all our thoughts to the heart-searching God.

3. God's promises to the captive Jews, speak encouragement to those who are necessarily hindered from his house and worship. I say *necessarily,* for *those who forsake the assembling of themselves together* without necessity, have no claim to it. He engages to be to such *a little sanctuary;* to visit, instruct, comfort, and accept them in their private meetings, as much as if they were at the temple in Jerusalem. And God will be a little church to his people when confined by sickness, in the care of young children, or other necessary avocations. If their spirits be serious and devout, he will *grant them the tokens of his presence,* the teachings of his Spirit, and communicate strength and comfort to them, though their brethren may censure or

redemption till the seventy years were completed. It is very likely that an account of this vision was sent to Jerusalem, as they had a correspondence with it; and it would have been happy for the Jews there if they had taken the warning.

despise them. Persons in such circumstances should guard their spirits; improve their solitude well, and employ their secret hours, even at home, as much as possible in sacred and sabbath work.

4. The greatest of God's favours is a pious, tender heart; when its natural hardness is subdued; corrupt dispositions rooted out; and the whole heart is for God and religion, tenderly affected with divine things, and fearful of sin. The best proof of possessing such a heart is a walking in God's statutes, and keeping his ordinances. It is happy when afflictions produce such a temper; when a change of condition is attended with a suitable change of heart. Without this, there can be no well-grounded hope of possessing the better country; and this must be *sought of God*; for he alone can *create in us a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within us.*

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## CHAPTER XII.

As some of the captives in Babylon regretted leaving Judea, and thought that by Zedekiah's continued reign, or the king of Babylon's being overcome, they might return to their own land; this chapter is designed to show them that those who were left at Jerusalem should soon be in a worse condition than they.

1 **T**HE word of the LORD also came unto me, saying, 2 Son of man, thou dwellest in the midst of a rebellious house, which have eyes to see, and see not; they have ears to hear, and hear not: for they [are] a rebellious house; *they do not use their understanding, are many of them rebellious, and encourage the Jews at Jerusalem to hold out, contrary to God's command.* 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; *pack up thy goods, as if going to remove, and do it by day, that all may see thee and consider it.* 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; *thou shalt steal away quietly, as if afraid to be seen, and through the wall, because the enemy surrounds the gate; and this shall be a sign that the inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be glad to escape any how.* 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 mine hand; I brought [it] forth in the twilight, [and] I bare [it] upon [my] shoulder in their sight. 8 And in the morning came the word of the LORD unto me, saying, 9 Son of man, hath not the house of Israel, the rebellious house, said unto thee, What doest thou? *It was natural for them to make the inquiry, and a strange instance of stupidity if they did not.* 10 Say thou unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; This burden [concerneth] the prince in Jerusalem, *from whom the captives have such high expectations,* 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 *his valuable things or necessary provisions,* 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, *and that he be not discovered; which was exactly the case with Zedekiah.* 13 My net also will I spread upon him, and he shall be taken in my snare: and I will bring him to Babylon, [to] the land of the Chaldeans; yet shall he not see it, though he shall die there\*. 14 And I will scatter toward every wind all that [are] about him to help him, and all his bands, *or guards, so that they shall not be able to rally their forces for his deliverance,* 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

\* This is a remarkable prediction; he was taken and brought to the king of Babylon at Riblah; there sentence was given against him as a rebel, and his eyes were put out; he was then carried to Babylon, and died there, but he did not see it, 2 Kings xxv. 5—7. Josephus tells us that Zedekiah thought this prophecy of Ezekiel inconsistent with that of Jeremiah, xxxiv. 3., and resolved to believe neither. Both however were literally fulfilled, and the event convinced him that they were not irreconcilable. Thus, blinded by infidelity, sinners rush on to that destruction against which they have been sufficiently warned.

that I [am] the LORD; *some, though but few, shall remain; they shall be humbled, make an ingenious confession of their sin, justify my proceedings against them, and thus give glory to the Lord.*

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; *look with an air of anxiety and terror, as if expecting that some one would come and take it away, or that it would be thy last;* 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, *or rather, so that the land shall be desolate, there shall be no fullness thereof,* because of the violence of all 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.

21 And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 22 Son of man, what [is] that proverb [that] ye have in the land of Israel, saying, The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth? *are prolonged beyond what the prophets foretold, and therefore there is no dependance to be placed upon any vision.* 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; *every vision shall take effect.* 24 For there shall be no more any vain vision nor flattering divination within the house of Israel; *they have been encouraged in the use of these proverbs and foolish expectations by some false prophets; but by seeing events happen quite contrary to their predictions, they shall regard such prophets no more.* 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, *knowing how ready they were to flatter themselves with the delay of judgments,* 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; *it shall come to pass immediately, and be executed in all its terror.*

## REFLECTIONS.

1. THOSE who will not use the faculties, and improve the means, which God has given them, are here said to be *rebellious*. This is not only the character of those who profane God's name, and slight his authority and laws; but of those also who will not employ the powers of their souls upon religious objects: their ignorance will be no excuse for them, because it is voluntary. Let us therefore *apply our minds to wisdom, and our hearts to understanding*; lest we perish in rebellion against the Lord.

2. God observes how men are affected by the pains that ministers take to awaken and reform them. He asks the prophet, whether the people had not inquired into the meaning of what he had been doing: they could not but know that some instruction was designed to be given them by it. It is the wisdom and duty of ministers to try every prudent method to convince the judgment of men, and to influence their hearts. God observes what attention their hearers pay to their addresses; what effect they have upon their minds; and is much displeased if they are careless and negligent; and will, for the neglect of these advantages, *bring them into judgment*.

3. When God preserves or raises up persons from threatening dangers, his design is that they may glorify his name; *v. 16*. The few that were left were to give glory to God, by confessing their guilt, and making his being, power, and righteousness, known among the heathen; as well as by knowing him better themselves. Thus, when his peculiar mercy is extended to us, particularly by supporting our lives, while many die around us, it should lead us to humble ourselves before him; and if we have done injury to others, to acknowledge it, and make them what amends we can. It becomes us to own God's righteousness and goodness, and exhort and admonish others to know him, and fear before him.

4. See how wretchedly men deceive themselves with the expectation that divine judgments are far off. With what false and trifling reasons did this people buoy themselves up with hopes of escape! Thus when men are now warned of the threatenings of God's word, and the approach of the eternal state, they will not consider, but say, *v. 27.*, *he prophesieth of the times that are far off*. At least they think that death is not near, and that they shall live many years. But this is an ungrateful abuse of the patience of God, and may provoke him to cut them off in their sins: and

if so, their destruction, being unexpected, will be so much the more dreadful. *Watch, therefore, and pray, lest ye enter into temptation; and, lest coming suddenly, he find you sleeping.*

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### CHAPTER XIII.

Contains solemn warnings and threatenings against the false prophets, who deceived the people to their ruin.

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, *without any commission from me*, Hear ye the word of the LORD; 3 Thus saith the Lord GOD; Woe unto the foolish prophets, that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing! *who declare what suits their present inclination and interest.* 4 O Israel, thy prophets are like the foxes in the deserts, *crafty, ravenous creatures.* 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; *when sin had made gaps in the fence of divine protection, and at these breaches judgments came in, they did not by their admonitions lead the people to repentance, nor by their prayers avert the anger of God, when it was ready to be poured out.* 6 They have seen vanity and lying divination, *they have forged lies concerning peace*, saying, The LORD saith: and the LORD hath not sent them: and they have made [others] to hope that they would confirm the word; *rather, that the word should be confirmed; that is, they led others confidently to expect prosperity.* 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 mine 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; and ye shall know that I [am] the Lord GOD\*. 10 Because, even because they

\* There is here a reference to the list, or record, of any society or corporation, of such as are entitled to its privileges; and it declares that they should be carried

have seduced my people, saying, Peace; and [there was] no peace; and one built up a wall, and, lo, others daubed it with untempered [morter:] *instead of providing a defence for the people, they have only palliated a bad matter, like men finely plastering a rotten wall, which has no strength, but soon tumbles and buries the workmen in its ruins: so, some of them have raised false hopes in the people, and others, seeing how agreeable this was to their countrymen, have pursued the same method.* 11 Say unto them which daub [it] with untempered [morter,] that it shall fall: there shall be an overflowing shower: and ye, O great hailstones, shall fall; and a stormy wind shall rend [it;] *that is, this rotten wall: God's judgments shall destroy them and their false hopes together.* 12 Lo, when the wall is fallen, shall it not be said unto you, Where [is] the daubing wherewith you have daubed [it?] *men shall ridicule your vain hopes and assurances.* 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 [morter,] 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 [morter,] 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. *This explains the former verses, and introduces a reproof to some prophetesses, who were carrying on the same wicked design.*

17 Likewise, thou son of man, set thy face against the daughters of thy people which prophesy out of their own heart, *and promise them safety in order to make them their prey,* and prophesy thou against them. 18 And say, Thus saith the Lord God; Woe to the [women] that sew pillows to all armholes, *who as a sign, put pillows under persons' arms, to denote that instead of being slaves, they should sit at their ease,* and make kerchiefs upon the head of every stature to hunt souls, *a beautiful head-dress, or garland wore in times of rejoicing, to intimate, that instead of desolation and distress, they should be in a state of joy and triumph;*

captives, never return to Jerusalem, should die without children, and have their name lost in Israel.

*and thus were hunting or destroying souls: Will ye hunt the souls of my people, and will ye save the souls alive [that come] unto you? or, Will ye save your own souls alive? ye cannot preserve your own lives, much less the lives of others.* 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? *will ye thus wickedly insult me, and abuse my people, for such small presents as handfuls of barley and pieces of bread\*?* 20 Wherefore thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I [am] against your pillows, wherewith ye there hunt the souls to make [them] fly, and I will tear them from your arms, and will let the souls go, [even] the souls that ye hunt to make [them] fly. 21 Your kerchiefs also will I tear, and deliver my people out of your hand, and they shall be no more in your hand to be hunted; and ye shall know that I [am] the Lord †. 22 Because with lies ye have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; and strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life; *discouraging those who surrendered to the Chaldeans by groundless fears, and encouraging those who obstinately held out by groundless hopes; directly contrary to what my prophets have warned and foretold:* 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; *ye shall be discouraged so as to make no more pretences to prophesy; or be made incapable of any further attempt.*

### REFLECTIONS.

1. WE are here taught who are really patriots, the best friends of their country; even those who make up the hedges and fences which sin has broken down, and by which judgments are entering in: they are those who endeavour by their admonitions, prayers,

\* Mr. Costard, an ingenious critic in the eastern languages, by comparing the words here used with some of the same kind in Arabic, gives a better translation of this passage, free from the odd jumble of metaphors in our translation: he renders it thus; *Woe to the women that wear nets to catch all legs, (or pairs of beasts,) and make nets (of a smaller kind) for the head of every (bird) rising up to fly;* in allusion to two sorts of nets, the one stronger, with which they took wild beasts; the other smaller, with which they caught birds.

† Or thus; *Behold, I am against your nets, with which ye hunt souls, and will tear them from your arms on which ye carry them; and your smaller nets will I tear.* This makes a beautiful, consistent sense, and admirably suits the connexion; while they were prophesying peace to the people, they were only hunting them down, and destroying their lives.

and examples, to restrain vice and avert the wrath of God; who stand up against the iniquities of the times, and endeavour to bring the workers and abettors of them to just punishment. When iniquity abounds, let not our love wax cold; but let us boldly appear on the Lord's side, that we may have the honour to be *repairers of breaches, and restorers of paths to dwell in.*

2. All attempts that are made to lessen the dread which men have of sin and of God's judgments, are displeasing to him. Wicked men are fond of any thing which may lead them to believe that sin is not so great an evil, nor the punishment of it in a future state so dreadful and durable, as they have been sometimes taught to believe: and there have been many, who have given them too much encouragement to make light of sin and the wrath to come. But this is only plastering and whitening a rotten wall, which will soon tumble, prove a refuge of lies, and destroy those who shelter under it. And those who have propagated and encouraged such dangerous notions, will find that they have been polluting God's name, and ruining themselves and those who were deceived by them.

3. We are taught how to behave, both to the righteous and the wicked. God would not have the righteous sad; and therefore we ought to be very careful not to do any thing to make them so; by confounding virtue and vice; representing some of the best men as hypocrites and enthusiasts; or by any other methods rendering them odious and despicable; whereas they ought to be honoured, comforted, and encouraged; to be kept in reputation, and have their hands strengthened by all who profess themselves friends to religion, to virtue, and to their country. On the other hand, let us be careful never to strengthen the hands of the wicked, by giving countenance to those who corrupt the morals or injure the families of others, by representing the vices of men in a favourable light, and willingly associating with those who are known to be the enemies to God and goodness; which is too much the case in the present age. We see how God resents such a conduct, and what mischief it does to a nation; and therefore should be upon our guard against it; and show our concern for the honour and support of religion, by frowning upon those who make themselves vile, and by *honouring those who fear the Lord.*

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## CHAPTER XIV.

The design of this chapter is to expose the hypocrisy of those who pretended to be worshippers of God while they were idolaters, and to show what calamities should come on Judea.

1 **T**HEN came certain of the elders of Israel unto me, and sat before me\*. 2 And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 3 Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their heart, *though they pretend to have renounced them*, and put the stumbling block of their iniquity before their face, *set up idols as objects of worship, which is their sin and will be their ruin*: should I be inquired of at all by them? *should I give such hypocrites a favourable answer?* 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; *I will judge and punish him accordingly*; 5 That I may take the house of Israel in their own heart, because they are all estranged from me through their idols; *that I may give them up to the natural and judicial consequences of their idolatry*.

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, *apostatizes from my service*, and setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumbling block of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to a prophet to inquire of him concerning me; I the LORD will answer him by myself, *by my awful judgments upon him*: 8 And I will set my face against that man, *I will directly and resolutely oppose him*, 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]

\* Who these elders were is uncertain; probably some persons of note, who came from Jerusalem to the king of Babylon, or on some other business in that country. These came to attend on Ezekiel with an ill design; particularly, to see if they could discern any contradiction between his prophecies and Jeremiah's, in order to weaken the authority of both.



the LORD; *his punishment shall be so remarkable, that it shall become proverbial.* 9 And if the prophet be deceived when he hath spoken a thing, I the LORD have deceived that prophet; *or, Have I the Lord deceived that prophet? is it to be charged upon me? or rather, I have permitted him to be deceived (as such an expression in scripture often signifies) as a punishment for his idolatries and pretences to inspiration;* 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,] *because they are both equally guilty; and the design of the punishment is,* 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.

12 The word of the LORD came again to me, saying, 13 Son of man, when the land sinneth against me by trespassing grievously, then will I stretch out mine 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.

\* Hence it is clear that the divine permission of his deception was consistent with his justice in punishing it.

† God may be so provoked with the sins of a nation, and so determined to destroy them, that he will hear no intercession for them; though Noah were to intercede, who was himself delivered because he was righteous, and delivered his children though they were not all good: or Job, who interceded for his friends, and prevailed. To these, Daniel is added, who was now alive, and but a young man. This honour God conferred upon him, as he intended to make him a great blessing to the public, and to animate him to all his services, and comfort him under all his sufferings. The Jews at Jerusalem might hear of the growing fame of Daniel, and think that if he had been with them they should have been delivered; but God assures them of the contrary.

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 ? *The sins of this people are so provoking, that I will unite all my judgments against them.*

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 ; *some shall be saved from the desolation and carried captive ; and those that were in Babylon before, shall rejoice that they have neither done wickedly nor suffered as others ; and they shall rejoice likewise to see so good an effect upon the temper and lives of their countrymen, as their sufferings will produce.* 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 ; *but that I have acted with perfect justice and a gracious design, and have mercy yet in store for them.*

## REFLECTIONS.

1. SEE how God resents the hypocrisy of his professing people. These elders pretended to inquire the will of the Lord, while they had cast off his worship, and were entirely devoted to idolatry. Thus many come now to the house of God, seemingly with good intentions, yet their hearts are estranged from him ; they have a secret antipathy to him and his service ; they attend, to keep up their reputation and satisfy their consciences ; yet are determined to retain their sins, and will not part with their beloved lusts. This is highly affronting to God, who knows their hearts and designs. They cannot expect peace ; their own hearts seduce them, their own consciences will chastise them, and God will condemn them.

2. The hand of God is to be observed and acknowledged in all calamities. Observe how God speaks of this in v. 15, 17, 19.

We see here his universal dominion, his power over all creatures, and how many ways he has of punishing a sinful people, who will not fear before him continually.

3. God's judgments upon men are designed to prevent their going astray, (v. 11.), or to reclaim them from wandering, and keep them near to him and faithful in his service for the future ; and to be a warning to others, that they do not pollute their souls, and lose the comforts and privileges of God's people. Let us consider our private afflictions in this light, and improve them to these purposes ; that we may be able to say with David, *before I was afflicted I went astray, but since I have kept thy word.*

4. See the efficacy of prayer, and how much it is our duty to intercede for a guilty land, v. 14—20. This passage plainly intimates, that the intercessions of holy men have great weight with God. He sometimes spares a wicked country, for the sake of the godly ; but if they go on to sin presumptuously, and the measure of their iniquities is full, even these will not prevail ; no not even to save their wicked children : nevertheless they will deliver their own souls, and not lose their final reward.

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## CHAPTER XV.

The design of this chapter is to represent how worthless Jerusalem was become. The Jewish church is often compared to a vine, on account of its excellent fruit ; but having quite lost all goodness and usefulness, it was fit for nothing but to be destroyed.

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 of any tree which is among the trees of the forest, *if it bears no fruit?* 3 Shall wood be taken thereof to do any work? or will [men] take a pin of it to hang any vessel thereon? *any common timber tree is more useful than a thousand vines, only for fruit ; so Jerusalem is only honourable and serviceable by being holy ; but, being degenerated, they are become good for nothing, as they know less of sciences, trade, and politics, than other nations.* 4 Behold, it is cast into the fire for fuel ; the fire devoureth both the ends of it, and the midst of it is burned. Is it meet for [any] work? 5 Behold, when it was whole, it was meet for no work : how

much less shall it be meet yet for [any] work, when the fire hath devoured it and it is burned? *Concerning other wood they say, it is a pity to burn it, it may do for this or the other use; but no man has a thought of taking a vine branch out of the fire: thus both the extremities of Judea shall be consumed by the ravages of the enemy, and the capital city, which is in the middle, shall be destroyed.* 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, *because they are become degenerate and worthless.* 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; *they shall go from one calamity to another, from one attack of the Chaldeans to another; if they escape one judgment, they shall fall into a greater.* 8 And I will make the land desolate, because they have committed a trespass, saith the Lord God; *they have prevaricated with God, professed to serve him, but still acted wickedly.*

## REFLECTIONS.

1. WE may hence take occasion to reflect on the wisdom and goodness of God, in the various productions of the earth, especially the trees. For how many uses are they fitted and designed! Some for building, others to make vessels and utensils of various kinds; some to delight us with their flowers and shade, and others with their fruit. But the vine is in this respect the glory of all trees, as it produceth *wine that maketh glad the heart of man*, and, when used in moderation, contributes so much to his happiness. We may well adopt the Psalmist's words, *O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all.* But,

2. The great lesson from this chapter is, That if they who profess religion are unfruitful, they are the most despicable and unworthy of men. The Jews trusted to their privileges; because they were represented as God's vineyard, they thought they should not be cut down. But he lets them know, that no privileges would secure them if they were unfruitful; that the heathen were better than they, who, from a general sense of God and their duty, were just, diligent, faithful, and compassionate. Fruitfulness is the main thing that is expected from us; and without it, we lose all excellency and esteem in God's sight; and, however men may

respect us, we are in his account good for nothing. Let us then look to ourselves, that we improve our advantages, *and abound in all the fruits of righteousness, which are to the praise and glory of God,* and for our own honour and comfort; otherwise we shall be fit fuel for the fire; *for now also is the axe laid to the root of the tree, and every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit shall be hewn down and cast into the burning.*

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## CHAPTER XVI.

This chapter is designed to convince the Jews of their great and shameful ingratitude to God, especially in their gross idolatry, under the emblem of a person taking care of an helpless exposed infant, bringing her up, marrying her, and supporting her with the greatest elegance and affection, but who after all proved lewd and abandoned. The whole is represented in a most beautiful and affecting light, and was probably sent by letter to Jerusalem.

1 **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 an Hittite; *they were like them, as bad as the worst of men.* 4 And [as for] thy nativity, in the day thou wast born thy navel was not cut, neither wast thou washed in water to supple [thee;] thou wast not salted at all, nor swaddled at all. 5 None eye pitied thee, to do any of these unto thee, to have compassion upon thee; but thou wast cast out in the open field, to the lothing of thy person, in the day that thou wast born.

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 thine 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 broidered work, and shod thee with badgers' skin, and I girded thee about with fine linen, and I covered thee with silk. 11 I decked thee also with ornaments, and put bracelets upon thy hands, and a chain on thy neck. 12 And I put a jewel on thy forehead, and earrings in thy ears, and a beautiful crown upon thine head; *a nuptial crown, referring in all this to the pains which God had taken to fashion Israel into an excellent state.* 13 Thus wast thou decked with gold and silver; and thy raiment [was of] fine linen, and silk, and broidered work; thou didst eat fine flour and honey, and oil: and thou wast exceeding beautiful, and thou didst prosper into a kingdom. 14 And thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty, *as a fine country:* for it [was] perfect through my comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord God.

15 But thou didst trust in thine own beauty, and playedst the harlot because of thy renown, *which should not have been done,* and pouredst out thy fornications on every one that passed by; his it was *to impose what kind of idolatrous ceremony he pleased upon thee.* 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;] *I will not suffer it any longer, but thou shalt be destroyed.* 17 Thou hast also taken thy fair jewels of my gold and of my silver, which I had given thee, and madest to thyself images of men, and didst commit whoredom with them. 18 And tookest thy broidered garments, and coveredst them: and thou hast set mine oil and mine incense before them. 19 My meat also which I gave thee, fine flour, and oil, and honey, [wherewith] I fed thee, thou hast even set it before them for a sweet savour: and [thus] it was, saith the Lord God. 20 Moreover thou hast taken thy sons and thy daughters, whom thou hast borne unto me, and these hast thou sacrificed unto them to be devoured. [Is this] of thy whoredoms a small matter, 21 That thou hast slain my children, and delivered them to cause them to pass through [the fire] for them? 22 And in all thine abominations and thy whoredoms thou hast not remembered the days of thy youth, when thou wast naked and bare, [and] wast polluted in thy blood; *thou hast forgotten thy low beginnings, and the divine goodness to thee.* 23 And it came to pass after all thy wickedness, (woe, woe unto thee! saith the Lord God;) 24 [That] thou hast

also built unto thee an eminent place, and hast made thee an 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; *thou hast entered into idolatrous alliances with all thy neighbours, which has the guilt of adultery, because thou wast in covenant with God, and his by a kind of marriage.* 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; *thou art worse than they, for they have not forsaken their gods and the religion of their country.* 28 Thou hast played the whore also with the Assyrians, because thou wast unsatiable; 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; *thou hast learned idolatry from all thy neighbours far and near.* 30 How weak is thine heart, saith the Lord GOD, seeing thou doest all these [things,] the work of an imperious whorish woman, *who is obstinately bent upon her wicked way, and cannot endure any contradiction therein;* 31 In that thou buildest thine eminent place in the head of every way, and makest thine high place in every street; and hast not been as an harlot, in that thou scornest hire; 32 [But as] a wife that committeth adultery, [which] taketh strangers instead of her husband! 33 They give gifts to all whores: but thou givest thy gifts to all thy lovers, and hirest them, that they may come unto thee on every side for thy whoredom. 34 And the contrary is in thee from [other] women in thy whoredoms, whereas none followeth thee to commit whoredoms: and in that thou givest a reward, and no reward is given unto thee, therefore thou art contrary; *thou art more willing to admit the worship of idols, than others are to impose it.*

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 thy 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; *the friends of Jerusalem shall mourn its fall, and its enemies shall insult over it.* 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; *a reference to the manner of punishing adultery under the law.* 41 And they shall burn thine houses with fire, and execute judgments upon thee in the sight of many women: and I will cause thee to cease from playing the harlot, and thou also shalt give no hire any more. 42 So will I make my fury toward thee to rest, and my jealousy shall depart from thee, and I will be quiet and will be no more angry; *which may refer to their being reformed by the captivity.* 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 [thine] head, saith the Lord God: and thou shalt not commit this lewdness above all thine abominations; *or thou shalt not execute thy wicked device because of all thine abominations.*

44 Behold, every one that useth proverbs shall use [this] proverb against thee, saying, As [is] the mother, [so is] her daughter; *they are as bad as the Canaanites, they are alike in their sin and in their punishment.* 45 Thou [art] thy mother's daughter, that lotheth her husband and her children; and thou [art] the sister of thy sisters, which lothed their husbands and their children: your mother [was] an Hittite, and your father an Amorite. 46 And thine elder sister [is] Samaria, she and her daughters that dwell at thy left hand: and thy younger sister that dwelleth at thy right hand, [is] Sodom and her daughters; *thou art like them in guilt.* 47 Yet hast thou not walked after their ways, nor done after their abominations: but as [if that were] a very little [thing,] thou wast corrupted more than they in all thy ways. 48 [As] I live, saith the Lord God, Sodom thy sister hath not done, she nor her daughters, as thou hast done, thou and thy daughters, *considering thy religious advantages, and it shall be more tolerable for Sodom than for thee.* 49 Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fullness of bread, and abundance of idleness



was in her and in her daughters; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. 50 And they were haughty, and committed abomination before me: therefore I took them away as I saw [good.] 51 Neither hath Samaria committed half of thy sins; but thou hast multiplied thine abominations more than they, and hast justified thy sisters in all thine abominations which thou hast done; *that is, comparatively justified them; made them appear less guilty.* 52 Thou also which hast judged thy sisters, bear thine own shame for thy sins that thou hast committed more abominable than they: they are more righteous than thou: yea, be thou confounded also, and bear thy shame in that thou hast justified thy sisters. 53 When I shall bring again their captivity, the captivity of Sodom and her daughters, and the captivity of Samaria and her daughters, then [will I bring again] the captivity of thy captives in the midst of them\*. 54 That thou mayest bear thine own shame, and mayest be confounded in all that thou hast done, in that thou art a comfort unto them; *an encouragement to them in their wickedness.* 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; *you forgot her ruin, though the dead sea was so near, but now by thy punishment other nations shall learn to despise thee for being as bad as they.* 57 Before thy wickedness was discovered, as at the time of [thy] reproach of the daughters of Syria, and all [that are] round about her, the daughters of the Philistines, which despised 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; *as thou hast broken thy covenant with me, in not serving me as my people, so I will not protect and bless thee as thy God.*

60 Nevertheless I will remember my covenant with thee in the days of thy youth, and I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant. 61 Then thou shalt remember thy ways, and be ashamed, when

\* This seems to denote an irrecoverable captivity; but by Sodom may here be understood the Ammonites and Moabites descended from Lot, who may be called Sodom, an infamous name, as the Israelites were called Canaanites on account of their wickedness; there are several prophecies of their restoration, and probably much about the time that the Jews were restored by Cyrus, but Bp. Newcome refers the words to the future restoration of the Jews, rather than to their return from Babylon. Some understand it of wicked Gentiles, nations who shall be converted in the latter days.

thou shalt receive thy sisters, thine elder and thy younger : and I will give them unto thee for daughters, *referring to the conversion of the Jews and Gentiles at last, but not by thy covenant ; not by the covenant of peculiarity ; they shall not become Jews, as you expected, but shall enter into the christian church and covenant.* 62 And I will establish my covenant with thee ; and thou shalt know that I [am] the LORD : 63 That thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord GOD ; *the remembrance of thy former guilt shall make and keep thee humble.*

### REFLECTIONS.

1. WE see that it is a matter of great importance to show men their abominations. All sin is hateful to God ; especially idolatry, as that is peculiarly affronting to him, and destructive of every good principle and disposition in the human heart. Men are unwilling to know their sins ; love to be deceived, and excuse or palliate them ; but without knowing them they will not repent and reform. It is the duty of God's ministers to be faithful reprovers ; and their attempts ought to be kindly received, and their admonitions thankfully complied with.

2. It is our duty to consider the kindness of God to us. The wickedness of Israel was owing to their forgetfulness of the favours which God showed them. Those who have been remarkably favoured by providence, who from low beginnings are advanced to wealth and affluence, should peculiarly guard against pride and ingratitude : and the regard God has shown to us all, in rescuing our fallen race from sin and misery, and bringing us into covenant with himself, ought carefully to be recollected, that we may make the most suitable and acceptable returns.

3. Let parents observe how highly God resents the sacrifice of his children. Your children are his, being by baptism devoted to him, and in his covenant. You abhor the inhumanity and cruelty of the Jews in sacrificing their children to Molech ; but many christian parents do worse ; they sacrifice their children to mammon, to pleasure, ambition, and other idols, and so are guilty of the greatest cruelty to God's children, and offer the most impious affront to him.

4. How detestable was the character of Sodom ! Observe what

led them to their enormities; pride, fullness of bread, and much idleness. Mr. Baxter observed many years ago, that this was an exact description of the English gentry; and I fear they are not mended since: luxury and idleness lead them to uncharitableness, haughtiness, lewdness, and all other abominations; and those especially who are in plentiful circumstances should take peculiar care, lest they become devoted to sensuality and pleasure; and so destroy their own souls.

5. Let us hence learn the nature and necessity of habitual repentance, v. 63., not to forget former sins, though God has pardoned them; but to remember them, in order to keep us humble; never to open our mouths in complaints of God's word or providence, or in vindication of ourselves, or censures of others; *for God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble.*

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## CHAPTER XVII.

Under the parable of two eagles and a vine is showed God's judgment upon Jerusalem, for revolting from Babylon to Egypt; and in ver. 22, God promises to plant the cedar of the gospel.

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; *a figurative speech, that they may the better remember and talk of it*; 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, *that is, Nebuchadnezzar, who was a warlike prince, had a great extent of dominion, and many nations confederate with him*, and took the highest branch of the cedar, *that is, the kingdom of Judah*: 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; *he took away Jeconiah the king, who was but eighteen years old, and carried him to Babylon, a place of great commerce.* 5 He took also of the seed of the land, *Zedekiah, his uncle, a native, and of the seed royal*, and planted it in a fruitful field, *in the land of Judea*; he placed [it] by great waters, [and] set it [as] a willow-tree, *which grows best in moist places.* 6 And it grew, and became a spreading vine of low stature, whose branches turned toward him, and the roots thereof were under him; *the kingdom prospered under Zedekiah, but it was still low of*

*stature, a tributary kingdom, and acknowledged the power of Nebuchadnezzar for a while: so it became a vine, and brought forth branches, and shot forth sprigs; he had children, and his kingdom was in a peaceful and flourishing condition.* 7 There was also another great eagle, with great wings and many feathers, *but not with such length of wings and number of feathers, viz., the king of Egypt, whose alliance Zedekiah sought:* 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; *he sent ambassadors to him for help.* 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; *Zedekiah was under great obligations to Nebuchadnezzar, that his kingdom was not torn in pieces, and that the form of government was preserved, and he might have been very prosperous and happy.* 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? *shall not Nebuchadnezzar plunder and destroy the city, and destroy him and his family for his perfidiousness?* 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; *it shall be easily done, for God shall appear on his side.* 10 Yea, behold, [being] planted, shall it prosper? shall it not utterly wither, when the east wind toucheth it? *which is a parching wind, that blasts the fruits of the earth:* it shall wither in the furrows where it grew; *even amidst the greatest and best helps to make it flourish.*

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?] *will ye not apply your minds to consider them?* tell [them,] Behold, the king of Babylon is come to Jerusalem, and hath taken the king thereof, and the princes thereof, and led them with him to Babylon; 13 And hath taken of the king's seed, and made a covenant with him, and hath taken an oath of him: he hath also taken the mighty of the land, *to weaken it, or rather, as hostages:* 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? *breaking the covenant with Babylon, and his alliance with Egypt, were both forbidden.* 16 [As] I live, saith the LORD GOD, surely

in the place [where] the king [dwelleth] that made him king, whose oath he despised, and whose covenant he brake, [even] with him in the midst of Babylon he shall die. 17 Neither shall Pharaoh with [his] mighty army and great company make for him in the war, by casting up mounds, and building forts, to cut off many persons; *though Pharaoh may come up to assist him, and the Chaldeans retreat for a while, they shall soon come again and take the city, so that Pharaoh will be of no assistance to them in the end:* 18 Seeing he despised the oath by breaking the covenant, when, lo, he hath given his hand, and hath done all these [things,] he shall not escape. 19 Therefore, thus saith the Lord GOD; [As] I live, surely mine oath that he hath despised, and my covenant that he hath broken, even it will I recompense upon his own head. 20 And I will spread my net upon him, and he shall be taken in my snare, and I will bring him to Babylon, and will plead with him there for his trespass, that he hath trespassed against me. 21 And all his fugitives with all his bands shall fall by the sword, and they that remain shall be scattered toward all winds: and ye shall know that I the LORD have spoken [it.]—*The chapter concludes with a remarkable prophecy, which some understand of the restoration of the house of David under Zerubbabel; but it rather refers to Christ; the highest, from the stock of David, when the family was reduced very low.*

22 Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will also take of the highest branch of the high cedar, and will set [it;] I will crop off from the top of his young twigs a tender one, and will plant [it] upon an high mountain and eminent; *that is, at Jerusalem, the high and holy mountain, where the gospel was first published.* 23 In the mountain of the height of Israel will I plant it: and it shall bring forth boughs, and bear fruit, and be a goodly cedar: and under it shall dwell all fowl of every wing; in the shadow of the branches thereof shall they dwell; *it shall become a great and flourishing kingdom, and gather many of all nations under it.* 24 And all the trees of the field, *all the nations,* 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 have been carrying on my great designs; have brought down those kingdoms which seemed most strong and lasting, and have exalted the kingdom of my Son: I the LORD have spoken and have done [it;] it shall as surely be accomplished, as if it were already done.*

## REFLECTIONS.

1. WE are here taught the sacred nature and binding force of solemn oaths and covenants; and the dreadful guilt of falsehood and perjury. See how God resented Zedekiah's violation of his oath and covenant. If he had any such casuists about him as there are in the church of Rome, they might persuade him, that as a king he was not obliged to keep his oath, especially as it was in some degree extorted from him, and made with a heathen, and a heretic. But *God will not be mocked*; oaths are too solemn things to be trifled with; he expects the greatest of men to keep them inviolable, and will punish even kings if they despise them. The church of Rome, which has asserted that no faith is to be kept with heretics, has dispensed with kings for violating their engagements, and allowed subjects to break their oaths of allegiance, proves herself by these things to be the mother of falsehoods and abominations. If ever we are called to take an oath of allegiance and fidelity; or, on any other account, to make a solemn public appeal to the God of truth, let us be faithful to our engagements. Whatever covenants we enter into, even with men, let us carefully fulfil them; and, though we swear to our own hurt, change not. But we should especially apply this to our covenant transactions with God, and our sacramental oath of fidelity to Christ. *Of how much sorer punishment shall he be thought worthy, who breaks this covenant, and thus tramples on the blood of Christ, and treats it as an unholy thing.*

2. Let us rejoice in the advancement and security of the kingdom of God. Amidst the tumults of the nations, God is always carrying on his own designs. They have often been very different from the expectations of men: but his schemes shall succeed, while theirs shall miscarry. He has raised up a kingdom out of the house of David, *a root out of a dry ground*. The beginning was small, but shall be greatly increased, and many nations be made subject to it. Let us bless God that he has founded, supported, and defended it; and that we are brought under the security and comfort of it. Let us fly to this tree, that is, to Christ, for shelter and happiness; and reverence and obey the laws of his kingdom. *Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who hath thus visited and redeemed his people.*

## CHAPTER XVIII.

This is a chapter in which we are all highly concerned, as the Judge of the earth gives us an account of his dealing with his creatures; at the same time instructing the Jews that they should find it better or worse with them, as they behaved themselves in their captivity.

1 **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? *intimating that it was as unjust to punish the son for the sins of the father, as that the children's teeth should be hurt and pained by what the fathers had eaten: by this they insinuated that they were better than their fathers; but their pretence was vain, their own sins being sufficient to justify God in the punishment he brought upon them.* 3 [As] I live, saith the LORD GOD, ye shall not have [occasion] any more to use this proverb in Israel, *there shall be such a visible difference between the righteous and the wicked.* 4 Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine; *they are equally my work, and therefore I will deal impartially by them: the soul that sinneth, it shall die; he shall suffer for his own fault here, and be miserable hereafter.*

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; *if he has not only done no injury, but relieved and supported those in distress;* 8 He [that] hath not given forth upon usury to his brethren, neither hath taken any increase, *any oppressive, unreasonable increase of strangers, (both of which were forbidden under the law)* [that] hath withdrawn his hand from iniquity *when he perceived that he began to act wrong,* and hath executed true judgment between man and man, 9 Hath walked in my statutes, and hath kept my judgments, *both the ceremonial and moral law,* to deal truly, *uprightly and sincerely, according to the best of his*

*knowledge, he [is] just, he shall surely live, saith the Lord GOD; shall enjoy the comfort and reward of his obedience, and need not fear any of those punishments that befall the wicked.*

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 neighbour's wife, 12 Hath oppressed the poor and needy, hath spoiled by violence, hath not restored the pledge *before the going down of the sun, as the law commanded,* and hath lifted up his eyes to the idols, hath committed abomination, 13 Hath given forth upon usury, and hath taken increase: shall he then live? he shall not live: he hath done all these abominations; he shall surely die; his blood shall be upon him; *his destruction is owing to himself.*

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, *hath neither oppressed nor ill-treated them,* [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? *they appeal to their own experience for the contrary. God replies,* 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\*.

21 But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath

\* There are some passages in scripture that seem to contradict this: as when God is said to visit the sins of the fathers upon the children: the meaning of which is, that God would bring such national calamities upon the Israelites for their idolatry, as would affect succeeding generations; such as war and captivity. But here, I imagine, he is speaking of the manner in which he will finally deal with souls.



committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. 22 All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him : in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live. 23 Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord GOD : [and] not that he should return from his ways, and live?

24 But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, [and] doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked [man] doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned : in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die.

25 Yet ye say, The way of the LORD is not equal. Hear now, O house of Israel? Is not my way equal? are not your ways unequal? *reflect upon what I have been saying, and then judge.* 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? *Then comes the application:* 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; *God has promised his Spirit and grace to those who attempt to do this, and therefore he may properly exhort them to make themselves a new heart, to turn, and live.*

## REFLECTIONS.

1. LET us observe and admire the condescension of God, in reasoning the case with these unreasonable men. He might have

silenced their profane tongues, and destroyed them at once. A little reflection would have convinced them of the injustice of their charge against God, if they had attended to the remonstrances of their prophets, and especially their promises, and invitations to repentance. But, unreasonable and profane as they were, God himself condescended to reason the case with them; choosing rather to convince than condemn them. Thus he proceeds still, *that he may be just when he speaketh, and righteous when he judgeth the children of men.*

2. Observe the claim which God has upon the spirits of men, *v. 4.* He breathed into men their souls; gave them rational capacities; supports them, and holds their souls in life: the souls of children are his; parents are the fathers of their flesh, but God is the father of their spirits; all are the work of his hands. Let us all remember and consider this. It is a proof that he will deal justly and impartially with his creatures; and is a motive to devote our souls, and the souls of our children to God; and to employ all our powers and capacities in his service.

3. We have important instruction to the descendants both of good and bad men. It is here supposed, and alas! fact too often confirms it, that the children of good men may prove wicked. When they do so, their birth and descent will be of no service to them: they shall be punished; and punished worse than others, because they have enjoyed such advantages for religion. Let the children of good parents therefore *rejoice with trembling.* On the other hand, if the children of wicked parents consider their conduct; what mischiefs their sins brought upon them and their families; what a reproach they were to themselves, and what they have reason to fear their end was; if they consider these things, and avoid the sins of their fathers, they shall not fare the worse for their wickedness: but be accepted of God, and enjoy the fruits of their own righteousness.

4. We should keep this representation continually in view; and expect this righteous judgment. There may be some difficulties in the divine dispensations in this world; and there were some rules of his proceeding peculiar to the Jewish dispensation: but this chapter leads us to the rule of God's final judgment. And these truths are plainly taught; viz., that he does not force men to sin; nor make their ruin inevitable; that no man shall be punished hereafter for the sins of his father, grandfather, or first father; however he may in the stated course of providence suffer for them: but that *every man shall receive according to his own*

*works, the things which are done in the body.* Let us then attend to our duty; *consider our ways; repent, and return to the Lord;* that is, turn from all sin to all righteousness; and then, through Christ, *we shall find mercy.* Let those who have done this, persevere. *If they turn from their righteousness, they will lose all they have wrought, and die in their iniquities.* God has promised his grace to those who will stir up themselves, and use their best endeavours. *Work out, therefore, your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who worketh in you to will and to do of his own good pleasure.*

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 CHAPTER XIX.

This chapter contains a lamentation for the princes of Israel, under the parable of lions' whelps taken in a pit; and for Jerusalem, under the parable of the wasted vine.

1 **MOREOVER** take thou up a lamentation for the princes of Israel, 2 And say, what [is] thy mother, *the kingdom of Judah?* A lioness: she lay down among lions, she nourished her whelps among young lions; *it hath been a bloody and cruel kingdom, and hath taught her princes to be so too; she hath learned the ill manners of her neighbours and allies.* 3 And she brought up one of her whelps; *Jehoahaz the son of Josiah, who was a tyrant, and made great desolation;* it became a young lion, and it learned to catch the prey; it devoured men. 4 The nations also heard of him; he was taken in their pit, and they brought him with chains unto the land of Egypt; *the Ammonites, Syrians, and Moabites came against him, and plundered the country; Pharaoh-necho took him prisoner, carried him to Egypt, and he was heard of no more.* 5 Now when she saw that she had waited for his return in vain, [and] her hope was lost, then she took another of her whelps, [and] made him a young lion; *set up his brother Jehoiakim, that is, Pharaoh did so with the people's consent. He was tyrannical and oppressive, and imitated the vices of his brother, without taking warning by his misfortunes.* 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 fullness thereof, by the noise of his roaring ; *he took away the houses of the great men, and depopulated the country.* 8 Then the nations, *the Chaldeans and their allies*, set against him on every side from the provinces, and spread their net over him : he was taken in their pit. 9 And they put him in ward in chains, and brought him to the king of Babylon ; they brought him into holds, that his voice should no more be heard upon the mountains of Israel ; *where he should cause no more terror nor make any more devastation.*

10 Thy mother [is] like a vine, *or, like a pomegranate*, in thy blood, *or, in thy quietness\**, planted by the waters ; she was fruitful and full of branches by reason of many waters ; *while Zedekiah was quiet, and paid his tribute regularly.* 11 And she had strong rods for the sceptres of them that bare rule, *valiant princes, fit to sway the sceptre*, and her stature was exalted among the thick branches, and she appeared in her height, with the multitude of her branches ; *the kingdom was in great power and glory.* 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 ; *her kings and princes were made captives, and many of the people destroyed.* 13 And now she [is] planted in the wilderness, in a dry and thirsty ground ; *is carried to Babylon, which is a wilderness, compared to her own country ; a disagreeable and dangerous situation.* 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 ; *Zedekiah, one of the royal family, hath brought this mischief upon her by breaking his oath with the king of Babylon.* This [is] a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation ; *they shall long lament it, and never be completely recovered.*

## REFLECTIONS.

1. SEE how lamentable are the circumstances of a people under tyrannical governors. What a noble yet dreadful description is here of the misery of Judah ! her princes are compared to lions, and very properly ; for *as roaring lions, and a raging bear, so are wicked rulers over a poor people*, when they pervert the end of their office, employ their power for mischief, deprive

\* See Bp. Newcome, in loc.

their subjects of their rights, break solemn engagements, and trample upon every thing sacred. Nations under such governors are much to be pitied. The sufferers lament it, and their posterity shall long lament it. Let us be thankful that it is not our case; but that we live under an equitable government; and earnestly pray, that *they who rule over men may be just, ruling in the fear of God*; and that he would raise up some to humble and bring down the tyrants of the earth.

2. When God removes men from his house and ordinances, they are in a wilderness. A remarkable phrase, in *v.* 13. Babylon was a noble, rich, and fruitful country; far from being a wilderness in itself; but it was so to the Jews; not so much on account of their hardships and sufferings there, as their being removed from the temple, sacrifices and feasts of the Lord. Whatever excellencies any situation may have, it is a wilderness, without religious advantages. This should direct us what to have principally in view in any settlement, and excite us to value and improve our privileges, lest he *plant us in a wilderness, in a dry and a thirsty land.*

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#### CHAP. XX. 1—44.

In which God refuseth to be consulted by the elders of Israel; gives them an history of their rebellions; and concludes with promises of their restoration.

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: *what their particular inquiry was, is not said; it seems to have been, whether they might comply with some of the idolatries in Babylon, that so they might be upon better terms with their neighbours.* 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; *or, I will not give you such an answer as you expect.*

4 Wilt thou *not* judge them, son of man, wilt thou *not* judge [them?] *and* cause them to know the abominations of their fathers: 5 And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; In the day when I chose Israel, and lifted up mine hand unto the

seed of the house of Jacob, and made myself known unto them in the land of Egypt, when I lifted up mine hand unto them, saying, I [am] the LORD your God, *and entered into covenant with them*; 6 In the day [that] I lifted up mine hand unto them, to bring them forth of the land of Egypt into a land that I had espied for them, *that is, chosen with peculiar care, a land 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, *those idols which you look upon with delight*, and defile not yourselves with the idols of Egypt (*which some of them had done in order to recommend themselves to their musters*): I [am] the LORD your God. 8 But they rebelled against me, and would not hearken unto me: they did not every man cast away the abominations of their eyes, neither did they forsake the idols of Egypt: then I said, I will pour out my fury upon them, to accomplish my 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; *I delivered them to fulfil my promise, and lest it should turn to my dishonour among the heathen if they were not brought out*. 10 Wherefore I caused them to go forth out of Egypt, and brought them into the wilderness. 11 And I gave them my statutes, and showed them my judgments, which [if] a man do, he shall even live in them; *they would have tended to preserve their lives, and promote their happiness*. 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; *though sabbaths were disused in Egypt, as their task-masters allowed them no rest, the command to observe them was then renewed*.

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; *treating them as common days, or practising idolatry in secret*: then I said, I would pour out my fury upon them in the wilderness, to consume them. 14 But I wrought for my name's sake, that it should not be polluted before the heathen, in whose sight I brought them out. 15 Yet also I lifted up my hand unto them in the wilderness, *I swore unto them*, 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; *that I would not bring them to Canaan, but*

*that their carcases should fall in the wilderness*; 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 *all at once, it was done by degrees*, neither did I make an end of them in the wilderness, *but spared their young people and their seed*. 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 is, of your relation to me, and of my favour to 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 my anger against them in the wilderness; *their several rebellions were attended with several judgments*. 22 Nevertheless I withdrew mine hand *from a full execution*, 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 mine hand unto them also in the wilderness, that I would scatter them among the heathen, and disperse them through the countries; *I swore to them in a most solemn manner, that if they sinned after I had brought them to Canaan, I would scatter them*; 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; *that is, I permitted these things; I gave them up to their own lusts, to idolatry and superstition; and, as it follows, suffered them to destroy their own families, while they dishonoured me\**. 26 And I polluted them in their own gifts, in that they caused to pass through [the fire] all that openeth the womb, that I might make them desolate, to the end that they might know that I [am] the LORD.

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

\* This may be illustrated by God's giving up the heathen to vile affections, and the papists to strong delusions.

trespass against me; *this great and heinous sin of idolatry.* 28 [For] when I had brought them into the land, [for] the which I lifted up mine 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, *which I had reserved for my own altar.* 29 Then I said unto them, What [is] the high place whereunto ye go? And the name thereof is called Bamah unto this day; *I expostulated with them for worshipping in the high places; I ordered that they should destroy and not name them; yet they were not ashamed to call them Bamah, that is, the high place; which showed their love of idolatry, and their impudence in practising it.*

30 Wherefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Are ye *not* polluted after the manner of your fathers? and commit ye *not* 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; *the end you propose to answer by conformity shall be defeated, you shall not live quietly with the heathen, nor enjoy the privileges of natives.*

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; *not gently as before:* 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, *as I did with your fathers in the wilderness, when they came out of Egypt; I will show you your crimes, and bring you to repentance.* 36 Like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness, *when I brought them out of the land of Egypt,* so will I plead with you, saith the Lord GOD; *I will gather you from your dispersion at last, and make a separation between the good*

\* This and the following verses are generally interpreted of God's bringing them from among the Moabites and Ammonites into Babylon, and not to Canaan again. But, I think, it refers to their conversion in the latter day, and cannot understand it in any other sense.



and the bad. 37 And I will cause you to pass under the rod, *I will survey you, as a shepherd doth his flock, counting their numbers, and marking such as shall be separated,* and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant, *the new or christian covenant:*

38 And I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me, *as I destroyed the rebels in the wilderness:* 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; *many of the Jews being converted to christianity, and receiving favours from christian states, some who are still infidels, will, for carnal reasons, join themselves to them to share in their temporal prosperity; but I will, by some extraordinary providence, separate the infidels (who shall be destroyed or dispersed) from the believers, who shall return to their own land.*

39 As for you, O house of Israel, *you of the present generation,* thus saith the Lord GOD; Go ye, serve ye every one his idols, *(probably this is spoken ironically,)* 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; *or, as it should be rendered, yet hereafter ye shall surely hearken to me, and ye shall not pollute my holy name any more with your gifts and with your idols.*

40 For in mine 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; *referring to the christian church, the worship of which is described, in allusion to their ancient worship.*

41 I will accept you with your sweet savour, when I bring you out from the people, and gather you out of the countries wherein ye have been scattered; and I will be sanctified in you before the heathen, *by my justice and mercy toward you.*

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 mine 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 lothe 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, *when I have exerted my power for your deliverance, and displayed my faithfulness to my covenant with your fathers;* not according to your wicked ways, nor according to your corrupt doings, O ye house of Israel, saith the Lord GOD.

## REFLECTIONS.

1. SEE how much God is displeased with an hypocritical attendance upon ordinances. These people came to inquire of Jehovah, while they retained an affection for idols, and were determined to worship them. No attendance upon God will be beneficial to ourselves and pleasing to him, except we be sincere and hearty in it. *God is a spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.*

2. We may hence learn what a privilege and blessing the sabbath is. Notice is taken of the institution of this, as one of the greatest favours to Israel, *v. 12.* It is a sign between God and his people; a sign of his favour to them and a concern for their happiness; and their observance of it is a sign of their relation to him, a sense of his authority, and a concern for his glory; and it is the way to be sanctified and made holy. To pollute his sabbaths, by putting them to a common use and pursuing common business and pleasure, is an affront to him: it is the source of many impieties; and brings his fury upon a nation.

3. To be steadily religious, is both our interest and happiness. God's statutes are to be observed: *he that doeth them shall live in them:* the design of them is to make us happy. But the Jews would serve God and idols too; they wanted to join them together; as men would now serve God and mammon. But such self-deceiving sinners shall not prosper, and are only the more enslaved by sin; whereas if we have no fellowship with the works of darkness, but fully cleave to the Lord, we shall live: not by our obedience to the law of God, considered in itself; for the apostle quotes this passage, *Gal. iii. 12.,* to prove that the law is not of faith; but *we shall be saved and live eternally, by the grace of God in Christ Jesus.*

4. We are taught that God's faithfulness to his covenant is the security of the church, and of every true christian. It is often mentioned, *I wrought it for my own sake, that my name might not be polluted:* his reason for defending his church, and preserving his people through faith unto salvation, are taken from his own glory; that he may show his faithfulness and mercy, and be honoured by all the world. Let this engage all his servants to honour him, and walk humbly before him.

## CHAP. XX. 45, to the end, and CHAP. XXI.

The latter part of the twentieth chapter belongs to the twenty-first, and should not have been separated, as it is a figurative description explained in the following verses.

45 **MOREOVER** the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 46 Son of man, set thy face toward the south, and drop [thy word] toward the south, and prophesy against the forest of the south field; *he was to look toward Judea, which lay south of Babylon, and to prophesy against Jerusalem, which lay in the south of Canaan, and was full of inhabitants, like trees in a forest, and of high and stately buildings;* 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; *desolation shall be made by the Chaldeans on rich and poor from one end of the land to the other.* 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? *They pretended that what the prophet said was dark and unintelligible, he is therefore commanded to prophesy plainly in chap. xxi.*

CHAP. XXI. 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, *like the dew and the rain,* and prophesy against the land of Israel, *against Canaan and Jerusalem, the temple and the courts,* 3 And say to the land of Israel, Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I [am] against thee, and will draw forth my sword, *that is, the king of Babylon,* out of his sheath, and will cut off from thee the righteous and the wicked; *the righteous indeed were many of them spared, but were cut off from their liberty and country, and carried captive.* 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; *the desolation shall spread through the whole land;* 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 *till it has*

*executed my commission.* 6 Sigh therefore, thou son of man, with the breaking of [thy] loins; and with bitterness sigh before their eyes; *shew all marks of grief and concern before the inhabitants of Jerusalem.* 7 And it shall be, when they say unto thee, Wherefore sighest thou? that thou shalt answer, For the tidings; because it cometh: and every heart shall melt, and all hands shall be feeble, and every spirit shall faint, and all knees shall be weak [as] water: behold, it cometh, and shall be brought to pass, saith the Lord GOD; *they shall neither be able to fight or flee, the strength of their body and spirits shall fail.*

8 Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 9 Son of man, prophesy, and say, Thus saith the LORD; Say, A sword, a sword is sharpened, and also furbished; *do not study fine expressions, but cry, A sword! a sword! as men do, Fire.* 10 It is sharpened to make a sore slaughter; it is furbished that it may glitter: should we then make mirth? *is this a time to rejoice?* it contemneth the rod of my son, [as] every tree; *or, alas! the sceptre of my son is destroyed; it despiseth every tree, it destroyeth Israel, and especially the royal family, the sceptre, as easily as any other nation, as any common men, (see chap. xix. 11.)* 11 And he hath given it to be furbished, that it may be handled: the sword is sharpened, and it is furbished, to give it into the hand of the slayer. 12 Cry and howl, son of man: for it shall be upon my people, it [shall be] upon all the princes of Israel: terrors by reason of the sword shall be upon my people: smite therefore upon [thy] thigh. 13 Because [it is] a trial, and what if [the sword] contemn even the rod? it shall be no [more,] saith the Lord GOD\*. 14 Thou therefore, son of man, prophesy, and smite [thine] hands together, and let the sword be doubled the third time, *that is, often; or it may refer to Nebuchadnezzar's three attacks upon Judea and Jerusalem, which brought entire destruction on them;* the sword of the slain: it [is] the sword of the great [men that are] slain, which entereth into their privy chambers, *where they thought to conceal themselves.* 15 I have set the point of the sword against all their gates, that [their] heart may faint, and [their] ruins be multiplied: ah! [it is] made bright, [it is] wrapped up, *or sharpened,* for the slaughter. 16 Go thee one way or other, [either] on the right hand, [or] on the left, whithersoever thy face [is] set; *the sword is commissioned to go where it*

\* It had better be rendered, *It is a trial, and what if it also despise the sceptre? it shall not remain, saith the Lord Jchovah:* that is, I intend to try my people by these judgments, and then this proud, contemptuous rod shall be itself consumed.

would, it would find wicked people every where, and have work enough in every quarter. 17 I will also smite mine hands together through just indignation, and encourage the sword to go on and do thorough execution, and I will cause my fury to rest upon thee: I the LORD have said [it.]

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 twain shall come forth out of one land: and choose thou a place, choose [it] at the head of the way to the city; draw a plan of the road, particularly of that part where the ways to Rabbath and Jerusalem divide; to represent Nebuchadnezzar's hesitation which he would attack first. 20 Appoint a way, that the sword may come to Rabbath of the Ammonites, and to Judah in Jerusalem the defended; as the Ammonites have entered into an alliance with Egypt, as well as the Israelites, therefore I am determined to punish both. 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, or, he mingled them; two arrows were put into a quiver, on one was written Rabbath, on the other, Jerusalem; a person drew one out, and which ever name was on that arrow, that country was to be attacked first; 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; the divinations appeared against Jerusalem, the omens and oracles determined for that to be attacked first, in order to instruct and animate the soldiers. 23 And it shall be unto them as a false divination in their sight, the Israelites shall think his divinations false, and believe that he will not come, to them that have sworn oaths, or, for the oaths made unto them: but he, the king of Babylon, 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, Zedekiah, profane wicked prince of Israel, who hast broken thy oath to the king of Babylon, whose day is come, the due season for thy punishment, 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; *Zedekiah's reign shall be no longer, the same form of government shall be no more.* 27 I will overturn, overturn, overturn it; *I will overthrow the different forms of government which shall be afterwards established:* and it shall be no [more,] until he come whose right it is; and I will give it [him;] *there shall no more be a king of the house of David, till the Messiah come, who is to be my king.*

28 And thou, son of man, prophesy, and say, Thus saith the Lord GOD concerning the Ammonites, and concerning their reproach, *which they cast upon Israel;* even say thou, The sword, the sword [is] drawn: for the slaughter [it is] furbished, to consume because of the glittering: 29 Whiles they see vanity unto thee, whiles they divine a lie unto thee, to bring thee upon the necks of [them that are] slain, *of the Israelites who were slain by them, adding them (though deceived, as the Israelites were,) to the number 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; *they shall be destroyed in their own land, where they thought themselves secure, and shall not be carried into captivity.* 31 And I will pour out my indignation upon thee, I will blow against thee in the fire of my wrath, and 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]. *Accordingly, about five years after the destruction of Jerusalem their country was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar.*

## REFLECTIONS.

1. WHEN men will not submit to the authority of the word, they love to find fault with it. Ezekiel's parables were sometimes too high and obscure, sometimes too plain and low; even when intended and adapted for their instruction and edification. When the stomach is disordered, the food is complained of. This is a difficulty which ministers still have to grapple with. And it is well for them that they can, with the prophet, bring their complaints to God, and seek assistance and blessing from him.

2. How absurd and unbecoming is mirth in times of distress! either of public calamity, or private affliction. It is very unreasonable in itself, and displeasing to God; defeats the design of his

providence; prevents the spirit from becoming serious and wise, which is the end of correction. There is not a surer sign of folly and irreligion, than to have a light, trifling spirit under affliction, and an unhumbed heart under humbling providences.

3. The calamities of God's people, however grievous, are but trials. A delightful thought to serious mourners! They are sent to try their faith and trust in God and his promises; to try what patience, fortitude, and indifference to the world they possess; what pity they have for other sufferers; and what charity for the instruments of their trouble; that is, to try and exercise their graces; and happy will it be for them if *the trial of their faith turn out to their praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ.*

4. Amidst the commotions and changes of the world, Christ's kingdom shall be established, and shall endure. The throne of David is his right. God hath fulfilled this prophecy; the promise that he should sit on the throne of David his father is accomplished. Let us rejoice that he is come; trust in him, and be faithful to him; for *he shall reign till he hath put down all rule and authority and powers that oppose him, and hath brought all his subjects to glory.*

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## CHAPTER XXII.

Contains a recital of the sins of Jerusalem, and the severe punishment that should follow.

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 show her all her abominations.  
 3 Then say thou, Thus saith the LORD GOD; The city sheddeth blood in the midst of it, that her time may come, *the time of her destruction*, 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, *the measure of thine iniquity is full, and the days of thy punishment are at hand*, and thou art come [even] unto thy years, *when thy kingdom shall end*; therefore have I made thee a reproach unto the heathen, and a mocking

unto all the 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, *the chief officers and magistrates*, every one were in thee to their power to shed blood; *the arm of every one was stretched out to shed blood by assassination, or under colour of justice.* 7 In thee have they set light by father and mother; *against which sin a curse is denounced in the law, (Deut. xxvii. 16.),* in the midst of thee have they dealt by oppression with the stranger; *took advantage of their necessities, or of their ignorance of the laws and customs of the country:* in thee have they vexed the fatherless and the widow. 8 Thou hast despised mine holy things, *the times, the places and things which were devoted to my service,* and hast profaned my sabbaths. 9 In thee are men that carry tales to shed blood; *who bear false witness, who charge others with treasonable words or seditious actions; or who make mischief in families, till their quarrels end in murder:* 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, *to bear false witness, or bring in an innocent person guilty;* 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 mine hand, *I have shown my abhorrence* at thy dishonest gain which thou hast made, and at thy blood which hath been in the midst of thee. 14 Can thine heart endure, or can thine 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; *I will put an end to thy idolatrous practices.* 16 And thou shalt take thine inheritance in thyself in the sight of the heathen, and thou shalt know that I [am] the LORD; *though I have been your inheritance, you are now cast off; shall be laid open; have no distinguishing privileges; and shall see what an inheritance you are to yourselves, especially among the heathen, that despise and persecute you.*

17 And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 18 Son of man, the house of Israel is to me become dross, *contemptible,*



*and good for nothing*; 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; *you gather yourselves to Jerusalem for safety, but I will gather you there for destruction, and leave you there to be destroyed.* 21 Yea, I will gather you, and blow upon you in the fire of my wrath, and ye shall be melted in the midst thereof. 22 As silver is melted in the midst of the furnace, so shall ye be melted in the midst thereof; and ye shall know that I the LORD have poured out my fury upon you.

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; *not cleansed by judgments, nor improved by the warnings of prophets.* 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; *bereaving women of their husbands, that is, putting them to death by false accusations, and then plundering their treasures.* 26 Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned mine holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they showed [difference] between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from my sabbaths, and I am profaned among them; *they have made no difference themselves between clean and unclean food, between holy and common times and places, nor have they taught the people to do it; they have put contempt on my sabbaths, and neglected public worship.* 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; *the false prophets have encouraged and countenanced this wickedness, in princes and people, and are become the tools of an oppressive and tyrannical government.* 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; *who should interpose to prevent the judgments which are entering in at the breach their sins have made: but I found none; therefore their ruin is inevitable.* 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.

## REFLECTIONS.

1. FORGETFULNESS of God is the source of all wickedness. After the black catalogue of Israel's sins, it is added, *v. 12., and hast forgotten me, saith the Lord God.* Men forget that he is their creator and preserver; they forget their dependance upon him, and obligations to him; the value of his favours, and the terrors of his wrath. It is strange that they should thus forget, surrounded as they are with proofs of these things. But alas! it is the general character. This not only brings men to despise sabbaths, and neglect ordinances; but it makes them oppressors, talebearers, despisers of parents; it leads them to falsehood, perfidy and murder. Let us beware then *that we forget not the Lord our God; but let the desire of our souls be to him, and to the remembrance of his name.*

2. How awful a thing is it to fall into the hands of the living God! *v. 14.* God will deal with men as a judge. Ignorant and brutish people fear it not; they think they can bear up under the weight of his anger, and therefore make light of his judgments; but they are dreadfully mistaken. No heart can endure it. *Who knows the power of his anger? Flee then from the wrath to come; flee to Christ, who delivers from it, that God may deal with you in mercy, and not in judgment.*

3. See what is our duty with regard to our nation. The thirtieth verse gives an instructive view of this. Sin makes gaps, at which judgments come in. There is a way of making them up; by repentance and reformation of ourselves; admonitions to others, and fervent prayer. God expects that all serious persons should attempt this: he is pleased when they do so; their attempts shall not be in vain. And every one may thus be a friend and benefactor to his country. But when there are few such, and those few are despised by the multitude, it is a sad symptom of

approaching ruin. Let us exert all our influence to prevent this ; that we may have the honour to be called, *repairers of breaches, and restorers of paths to dwell in.*

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## CHAPTER XXIII.

The idolatries of Samaria and Jerusalem are represented in this chapter by the lewd practices of two common harlots ; for which God denounces severe judgments against them\*.

1 **T**HE word of the LORD came again unto me, saying, 2 Son of man, there were two women, the daughters of one mother. 3 And they committed whoredoms in Egypt; they committed whoredoms in their youth: there were their breasts pressed, and there they bruised the teats of their virginity. 4 And the names of them [were] Aholah the elder, and Aholibah her sister: and they were mine, and they bare sons and daughters. Thus [were] their names; Samaria [is] Aholah, and Jerusalem Aholibah. 5 And Aholah played the harlot when she was mine; and she doted on her lovers, on the Assyrians [her] neighbours, 6 [Which were] clothed with blue, captains and rulers, all of them desirable young men, horsemen riding upon horses. 7 Thus she committed her whoredoms with them, with all them [that were] the chosen men of Assyria, and with all on whom she doted: with all their idols she defiled herself. 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. 11 And when her sister Aholibah saw [this,] she was more corrupt in her

\* Mr. Orton did not read this chapter in public, and therefore passed it over without any notes or reflections. Bp. Newcome says, 'The style of this chapter, like that of the sixteenth, is adapted to men among whom at that time no refinement subsisted.' Large allowance must be made for language addressed to an ancient eastern people, in the worst period of their history; all whose ideas were sensual, and whose grand inducement to idolatry seems to have been the brutal impurities which it encouraged.

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

22 Therefore, O Aholibah, thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will raise up thy lovers against thee, from whom thy mind is alienated, and I will bring them against thee on every side; 23 The Babylonians, and all the Chaldeans, Pekod, and Shoa, and Koa, [and] all the Assyrians with them: all of them desirable young men, captains and rulers, great lords and renowned, all of them riding upon horses. 24 And they shall come against thee with chariots, wagons, and wheels, and with an assembly of people, [which] shall set against thee buckler and shield and helmet round about: and I will set judgment before them, and they shall judge thee according to their judgments. 25 And I will set my jealousy against thee, and they shall deal furiously with thee: they shall take away thy nose, and thine ears; and thy remnant shall fall by the sword: they shall take thy sons and thy daughters; and thy residue shall be devoured by the fire. 26 They shall also strip thee out of thy clothes, and take away thy fair jewels. 27 Thus will I make thy lewdness to cease from thee, and thy whoredom [brought] from the land of Egypt: so that thou

shalt not lift up thine eyes unto them, nor remember Egypt any more. 28 For thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will deliver thee into the hand [of them] whom thou hatest, into the hand [of them] from whom thy mind is alienated: 29 And they shall deal with thee hatefully, and shall take away all thy labour, and shall leave thee naked and bare: and the nakedness of thy whoredoms shall be discovered, both thy lewdness and 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 thine hand. 32 Thus saith the Lord GOD; Thou shalt drink of thy sister's cup deep and large: thou shalt be laughed to scorn and had in derision; it containeth much. 33 Thou shalt be filled with drunkenness and sorrow, with the cup of astonishment and desolation, with the cup of thy sister Samaria. 34 Thou shalt even drink it and suck [it] out, and thou shalt break the sherds thereof, and pluck off thine own breasts: for I have spoken [it,] saith the Lord GOD. 35 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thou hast forgotten me, and cast me behind thy back, therefore bear thou also thy lewdness and thy whoredoms.

36 The LORD said moreover unto me; Son of man, wilt thou judge Aholah and Aholibah? yea, declare unto them their abominations; 37 That they have committed adultery, and blood [is] in their hands, and with their idols have they committed adultery, and have also caused their sons, whom they bare unto me, to pass for them through [the fire,] to devour [them.] 38 Moreover this they have done unto me: they have defiled my sanctuary in the same day, and have profaned my sabbaths. 39 For when they had slain their children to their idols, then they came the same day into my sanctuary to profane it; and, lo, thus have they done in the midst of mine 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 thy 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 Sabceans 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 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 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.

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## CHAPTER XXIV.

The prophet now tells those of the captivity the very day on which Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to Jerusalem, (compare Jeremiah lii. 4.), and describes the fate of that city and its inhabitants by the similitude of a seething pot; the pot signifies Jerusalem, the flesh and pieces, the inhabitants, and the coals and the water, the calamities they were to endure. The prophet is also forbidden to mourn for his wife; which intimates, that the sufferings of the Jews should surpass all expressions of grief; and that private sorrow ought to be absorbed in the public calamities.

1 **AGAIN** in the ninth year, in the tenth month, in the tenth [day] of the month, the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 2 Son of man, Write thee the name of the day, [even] of this same day: the king of Babylon set himself against Jerusalem this same day; *a remarkable circumstance revealed to the prophet when at a very great distance off; he was to foretell the destruction of the people and city as then begun, and the event would confirm the truth of his mission.* 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; *a reference to Jeremiah's seeing a caldron, and the people's saying, This city, the caldron, is as safe as if surrounded with brasen walls.* 4 Gather the

pieces thereof into it, [even] every good piece, the thigh, and the shoulder; fill [it] with the choice bones, *the chief of the people.* 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; *let it boil till the water is evaporated, the flesh torn to pieces, and even the bones softened.* 6 Wherefore thus saith the LORD GOD; Woe 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: *the principal men shall be brought out and slain; let no lot fall upon it; there shall be no lot cast which to take and which to save, for all, one way or other, shall be destroyed.* 7 For her blood, *that is, the blood shed by her,* 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; *she committed her cruelties openly, she took no pains to conceal them;* 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; *her punishment shall be as notorious as her sins.* 9 Therefore thus saith the LORD GOD; Woe to the bloody city! I will even make the pile for fire great. 10 Heap on wood, kindle the fire, consume the flesh, and spice it well, and let the bones be burned; *I will bring upon them utter destruction: and it shall be as agreeable to the Chaldean soldiers to destroy and plunder them, as well-seasoned meat is to the palate.* 11 Then set it empty upon the coals thereof, that the brass of it may be hot, and may be burned, and [that] the filthiness of it may be molten in it, [that] the scum of it may be consumed; *which intimates, that the city itself should be destroyed, since the scum or filth that cleaved to the pot would not be separated.* 12 She hath wearied [herself] with lies, *with idolatry, and vain confidence in allies,* and her great scum, *that is, her wickedness,* went not forth out of her; *all the admonitions of the prophets were in vain:* her scum [shall be] in the fire; *her wickedness shall be punished in the fire that burns the city.* 13 In thy filthiness [is] lewdness; *great corruption and impudence:* because I have purged thee, *that is, have attempted to purge thee,* and thou wast not purged, thou shall not be purged from thy filthiness any more, till I have caused my fury to rest upon thee; *till I have brought upon thee the destruction I intended.* 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; *I will be absolutely inexorable, and fulfil my threatenings to the utmost.*

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, *thy wife, the object of thy love and affection*, with a stroke; yet neither shalt thou mourn nor weep, neither shall thy tears run down. 17 Forbear to cry, make no mourning for the dead, bind the tire, *or turban*, of thine head upon thee, and put on thy shoes upon thy feet, *thou shalt not go bare-headed and barefoot as is usual in mourning*, and cover not [thy] lips, *by putting a veil over the head*, and eat not the bread of men, *the provisions which their relations used to send in upon such occasions, as supposing the mourners not inclined to dress any for themselves; in a word, use none of the customary forms of mourning*. 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; *I went abroad without mourning*.

19 And the people said unto me, Wilt thou not tell us what these [things are] to us, that thou doest [so?]  
*They were surprised that Ezekiel, whose temper was so affectionate, was not concerned for the loss of a good wife, and imagined there was something extraordinary in the case; perhaps they fancied it signified something favourable to them.* 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 temple, which you are so fond of, shall be delivered to the heathen*, the excellency of your strength, the desire of your eyes, and that which your soul pitieth, *or affecteth, and whereon you rely for security*; and your sons and your daughters whom ye have left, *and who were as dear to you, as my wife was to me*, 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 toward another; *ye shall have no heart to mourn for your nearest relations; ye shall be quite amazed and stupid; ye shall look on one another with dismal countenances, and yet have no true repentance.* 24 Thus Ezekiel is unto you a sign, *to show you what shall be your condition*: according to all that he hath done shall ye do: and when this cometh, ye shall know that I [am] the Lord GOD; *that your idols are vain, and that my hand is in all these judgments.*

25 Also, thou son of man, [shall it] not [be] in the day when I take from them their strength, the joy of their glory, the desire of their eyes, and that whereupon they set their minds, their sons and



their daughters; *when I take away their temple, their city, their relations, and comforts*; 26 [That] he that escapeth in that day shall come unto thee, to cause [thee] to hear [it] with [thine] ears? *some one shall come and tell thee the news.* 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: *for a year and a half no message from God was sent to them; for Ezekiel prophesied only concerning other nations; and there was an expressive language in his silence, if they had been wise enough to attend to it.*

### REFLECTIONS.

1. WE may reflect upon the dreadful case of those, on whom ordinances and providences have no good effect; to whom messengers, predictions, instructions, threatenings, and lesser judgments have been sent, but all in vain. God would have purged the Jews, but they would not be purged. They never considered his intentions, nor put away those sins for which he contended with them, but were made worse, rather than better, by them. This is the desperate case of many sinners still; and it is an awful consideration that it should be so. But God will be true to his threatenings, v. 14. God grant that we may never know by our own experience what such denunciations mean.

2. The prophet's being commanded not to mourn for his wife, suggests some important instructions to us. We may have agreeable relations, especially yoke-fellows, the desire of the eyes; most pleasing objects, and delightful relatives. But they are mortal; may be removed *by a stroke*, suddenly and unexpectedly. Let us consider them in this light. Those who have wives, or other beloved friends, should be as though they had none; should not depend too much upon them for happiness here, but by mutual piety and kindness lay a foundation for eternal friendship. Let us remember it is the stroke of God that removes them. *Behold, I take away.* This is a reason for humble submission. We may weep, but it should be under the restraints of reason and religion. Let us guard against excess of grief; and be careful to improve such afflictive events; that we *be not slothful, but followers of them, who through faith and patience inherit the promises.*

3. See how foolish it is to set our minds on earthly things;

fine houses, substance, or even relations, v. 23. The heart follows the eye; we forget their fading nature; our affection for them lessens our concern about unseen things. But they are all fading; and if we set our minds upon them, it may provoke God to take them away. Let us then be concerned *to walk by faith*; to set our minds on better objects; *to look not on things that are seen and temporal, but on those that are unseen and eternal.*

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## CHAPTER XXV.

This chapter contains threatenings of the heavy judgments of God, against the Ammonites, Moabites, Edomites, and Philistines, on account of their hatred to his people, and their insulting them in the time of their distress.

1 **T**HE 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; *because thou didst this through jealousy of Israel as a rival, and hatred to their religion*; 4 Behold, therefore, I will deliver thee to the men of the east for a possession, *that is, to the Chaldeans, who lay north-east, (and who came and destroyed this country about five years after this prophecy; upon which the Arabians came and took possession of it,)* and they shall set their palaces in thee, and make their dwellings in thee; *that is, the Arabians shall erect their tents, and take up their dwellings, as in a conquered country*: they shall eat thy fruit, and they shall drink thy milk. 5 And I will make Rabbah, *the royal city*, a stable for camels, and *the country of the Ammonites* a couching place for flocks: and ye shall know that I [am] the LORD, *the God of Israel, and the Lord of the whole earth.* 6 For thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thou hast clapped [thine] hands, and stamped with the feet, and rejoiced in heart, with all thy despite against the land of Israel; *that is, hast showed prodigious spite and malice; which was the more shameful, as they knew that Nebuchadnezzar intended to come against them, and that he was in debate with himself whether he should come against*

*them or Jerusalem first*: 7 Behold, therefore I will stretch out mine 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.

8 Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because that Moab and Seir, *the posterity of Lot and Esau*, do say, Behold, the house of Judah [is] like unto all the heathen *in apostacy and calamity, and is not distinguished by the visible protection of God*; 9 Therefore, behold, I will open the side of Moab from the cities, from his cities [which are] on his frontiers, the glory of the country, Beth-jeshimoth, Baal-meon, and Kiriathaim; *the enemy shall enter in at the frontiers, destroy the principal cities and the whole country, and thus I will give the Moabites also* 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, *the descendants of Esau*, hath dealt against the house of Judah by taking vengeance, and hath greatly offended, and revenged himself upon them; *not only in encouraging the Chaldeans, saying, Raze it, raze it, but they themselves making inroads upon it*; 13 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; I will also stretch out mine hand upon Edom, and will cut off man and beast from it; and I will make it desolate from Teman, *on the south*; and they of Dedan, *on the north*, shall fall by the sword; *all the inhabitants of the country shall be destroyed*. 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; *referring to the conquest of the Edomites by the Maccabees, and especially to Hircanus, an high priest of that family, about four hundred and fifty years after this*.

15 Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because the Philistines have dealt by revenge, and have taken vengeance with a despiteful heart, to destroy [it,] *that is, the land of Judea*, for the old hatred, *on account of the old enmity between them and Israel*; 16 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I stretch out mine hand upon the Philistines, and I will cut off the Cherethims, and destroy the remnant of the sea coasts. 17 And I will execute great vengeance upon them with furious rebukes; and they shall

know that I [am] the LORD, when I shall lay my vengeance upon them; *this was fulfilled when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the Philistines a few years after\**.

### REFLECTIONS.

1. How weak is all the glory of man, when God sets himself against it! The strongest and most populous cities, the glory of a country, are easily taken and destroyed, when God opens the sides of them, and gives their enemies liberty to enter. Whoever are the instruments of destroying the glory of kingdoms and people, it is God who directs and prospers them. This consideration should induce us not to make any earthly thing our glory; but trust in the divine protection and promises; for they, and they alone, are sure.

2. The principal instruction to be drawn from the whole chapter is, that God is greatly displeased with those who rejoice in the afflictions of others; not merely with those who revenge themselves, but those also who take pleasure in the sufferings of others. His controversy with all these countries was because they helped forward and triumphed in the desolations of Israel. When persons bear a grudge against their neighbours, hate their rivals in trade, endeavour to do them an injury, and rejoice when they meet with losses and disappointments, and say, *Ah, so would we have it*; it shows a most spiteful, malignant, and diabolical spirit; especially when they impute their calamities to divine judgments. Persons of this hellish disposition forget that the cup of affliction goes its round, and may soon be put into their hands. The stroke of divine vengeance will come with double force on those who have avenged themselves; and *he that is glad at calamities shall not go unpunished*.

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\* There might probably be some method of sending these prophecies by letter to the princes and leading men of those nations, to reprove their vices, and to give them warning of the judgments coming upon them; at least they confirmed the prophet's mission, and answered very important purposes to the Israelites.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

The prophecy, beginning here, and ending at the 20th verse of chap. xxviii., foretells the destruction of Tyre, which was taken nineteen years after by Nebuchadnezzar, after a siege of thirteen years.

1 **AND** it came to pass in the eleventh year, in the first [day] of the month, [that] the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,  
 2 Son of man, because that Tyrus hath said against Jerusalem, Alia, she is broken [that was] the gates of the people: she is turned unto me: I shall be replenished, [now] she is laid waste\* :  
 2 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; *as the sea rolls its waves against thee, so shall the army of Nebuchadnezzar come with irresistible force.* 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, *the towns and cities, and the coasts that belong to her,* shall be slain by the sword; and they shall know that I [am] the LORD.

7 For thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will bring upon Tyrus Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, a king of kings, from the north, with horses and with chariots, and with horsemen, and companies, and much people. 8 He shall slay with the sword thy daughters in the field: and he shall make a fort against thee, and cast a mount against thee, and lift up the buckler against thee. 9 And 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

\* Tyre was in alliance with Jerusalem, yet, from a selfish principle, rejoiced in its destruction, concluding that there would be greater resort to, and a greater trade with, herself; Jerusalem is called *the gates of the people*, because it was a populous place, and there was a great resort of proselytes and strangers there, especially at the feasts.

† This denotes the great rage with which the city should be attacked; that her buildings should be entirely destroyed, and she left bare as a rock; which was literally accomplished, when the rubbish was afterwards carried away by Alexander, to make a causeway to attack new Tyre, which stood on an island.

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; *all of which represents the tumult and desolation occasioned by a conquering army.* 11 With the hoofs of his horses shall he tread down all thy streets: he shall slay thy people by the sword, and thy strong garrisons shall go down to the ground. 12 And they shall make a spoil of thy riches, and make a prey of thy merchandise: and they shall break down thy walls, and destroy thy pleasant houses: and they shall lay thy stones and thy timber and thy dust in the midst of the water\*. 13 And I will cause the noise of thy songs to cease; and the sound of thy harps shall be no more heard. 14 And I will make thee like the top of a rock: thou shalt be [a place] to spread nets upon: thou shalt be built no more: for I the LORD have spoken [it,] saith the Lord GOD†.

15 Thus saith the Lord GOD to Tyrus; Shall not the isles, *the neighbouring isles, or a maritime country called isles,* shake at the sound of thy fall, *as neighbouring ground shakes when some large building falls,* 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, *either the princes of the neighbouring country, or merchants and captains that live like princes,* 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 seafaring men, the renowned city which wast strong in the sea, *by thy situation, trade, and naval force,* she and her inhabitants, which cause their terror [to be] on all that haunt it! *on all who frequent the sea, having lost their trade with them, and being apprehensive of danger to themselves.* 18 Now shall the isles tremble in the day of thy

\* Tyre was a city abounding in riches and luxuries, which the enemy should throw into the sea; or rather, it is a prophecy of the use which Alexander should make of them.

† Tyre was famous after this time, but it was new Tyre, not that against which judgment is here denounced. Maundrel tells us, that there are scarce any remains of old Tyre; there are no entire houses, only a few pillars, and some old vaults which are inhabited by fishermen, who spread their nets upon the rocks. It was strange that Nebuchadnezzar should destroy so beautiful, so well situated, and flourishing a city, which might have been very advantageous to him; but the siege of the place had been very troublesome; he was thirteen years about it, had wasted vast treasures, and lost great numbers of his men; and when he entered the city, the inhabitants had gone off by sea, with all their valuable effects: at which he was so much enraged, that he utterly destroyed it, and so fulfilled the word of the Lord.

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; (*its destruction is compared to a shipwreck*); 20 When I shall bring thee down with them that descend into the pit, with the people of old time, *who are dead and forgotten; or, like the old world, which was destroyed by water; or, like Sodom, which was sunk in the dead sea*; 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; *that is, restore Israel, and appoint glory to that land, though it be less taken notice of, and its destruction less regarded than theirs; but* 21 I will make thee a terror, *or terrors*, and thou [shalt be] no [more:] though thou be sought for, yet shalt thou never be found again *in so flourishing a condition as formerly*, saith the Lord GOD.

### REFLECTIONS.

1. LET me repeat the admonition given in the last chapter, That to be pleased with the ruin or decay of others, because we are likely to gain by it, is a very wicked temper. Tyre had no hatred to Jerusalem, as other nations had, on account of their religion; but considered them as rivals in trade; and rejoiced in Jerusalem's destruction as their gain. It is to be feared that many, and some who profess religion too, are of this disposition. They say, I shall be replenished now he is dead, or laid waste. This shows a very criminal love of the world; a want of love to our neighbour; and a mean, selfish, wretched spirit; and justly may God blast those who hope to flourish by the sufferings of others.

2. This chapter gives an awful warning to Great Britain. Like the Tyrians, we are strong in the sea, in situation, extensive trade, and naval force. But the strongest situation, the greatest traffic, or naval power, cannot secure a country, when God gives an enemy a commission against it. Thus can he bring us down, and make other nations, our allies and correspondents, tremble at the fall. *Let us then not be high-minded, but fear*: do our part to ensure the favour of heaven, by advancing that righteousness which will be our greatest excellency, and our surest defence.

3. When God brings destruction on those who hate his people,

he has glory in reserve for them. They may suffer and be afflicted, like others; may be hated and despised; but God intends glory to them; glory in heaven, which is properly the land of the living; for there shall be no more death. It will add unspeakable terror to the miserable creatures who are gone down to the pit of destruction, to see the glory which those possess, whom they injured, reproached, and contemned. Let God's people rejoice in hope of this glory; and let all *choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than enjoy the pleasures of sin, which are but for a season.*

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## CHAPTER XXVII.

This chapter continues the prophecy of the ruin of Tyre: as it was common for mourners at funerals first to proclaim the excellencies, and then to lament the loss, of the deceased, so the prophet here, first celebrates the beauty, wealth and glory of Tyre; and then declares its irrecoverable fall. He could be supposed to know but little of the trade of Tyre himself; yet he minutely describes it; which, among others, is a plain proof of his inspiration.

1 **T**HE word of the LORD came again unto me, saying, 2 Now, thou son of man, take up a lamentation for Tyrus; 3 And say unto Tyrus, O thou that art situate at the entry of the sea, *at the east end of the Mediterranean, called the Levant*, [which art] a merchant of the people for many isles, *that is, countries on the sea-shore*, Thus saith the Lord God; O Tyrus, thou hast said, I [am] of perfect beauty; *wanting nothing to make the nations ambitious of my friendship, and to establish a free trade with me.* 4 Thy borders [are] in the midst of the seas, thy builders, *especially the builders of ships*, have perfected thy beauty. 5 They have made all thy [ship] boards, *the decks, cabins, and state rooms*, 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; *or, of box-tree have they made thy benches, inlaid with ivory, brought from some parts about the Mediterranean sea.* 7 Fine linen with brodered work from Egypt was that which thou spreadest forth to be thy sail, *or rather, for thy flags*; blue and purple from the



isles of Elishah, *from the Peloponnesus*, was that which covered thee; or, *the awning spread over part of thy ships*. 8 The inhabitants of Zidon and Arvad were thy mariners: thy wise [men,] O Tyrus, [that] were in thee were thy pilots. 9 The ancients of Gebal and the wise [men] thereof were in thee thy calkers, *to stop leaks and repair what was amiss*; all the ships of the sea with their mariners were in thee to occupy thy merchandise. 10 They of Persia and of Lud and of Phut were in thine army, thy men of war: they hanged the shield and helmet in thee; they set forth thy comeliness, *thy pomp and splendour*. 11 The men of Arvad with thine army [were] upon thy walls round about, and the Gammadims, *either a people of Phœnicia, or, in general, guards*, were in thy towers; they hanged their shields upon thy walls round about; they have made thy beauty perfect. 12 Tarshish, *or Spain, which was anciently remarkable for silver mines*, [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, *or Greece*, and Tubal, and Meshech, *the sons of Japheth, (Gen. x. 2.) who dwelt about mount Caucasus*, they [were] thy merchants: they traded the persons of men, *traded in slaves, (which is branded by St. Paul as highly criminal, 1 Tim. 1. 10.)*, 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 thine 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; *the Tyrians did not neglect their own manufactures for foreign trade, they were remarkable for fine purple*; they occupied in thy fairs with emeralds, purple, and brodered work, and fine linen, and coral, and agate. 17 Judah and the land of Israel, they [were] thy merchants: they traded in thy market wheat of Minnith and Pannag; *Minnith lay in a valley in Canaan, that produced excellent wheat; though it was a small tract of country, and had a multitude of inhabitants, and the land lay untilled every seventh year, yet such an extraordinary blessing attended it, that it could export wheat*, and honey, and oil, and balm. 18 Damascus [was] thy merchant in the multitude of the wares of thy making, for the multitude of all riches; in the wine of Helbon, *or Aleppo*, and white wool. 19 Dan also and Javan going to and fro, occupied in thy fairs: bright iron, cassia, and calamus, were in thy market. 20 Dedan [was] thy merchant in precious clothes for chariots.

21 Arabia, and all the princes of Kedar, they occupied with thee in lambs, and rams, and goats: in these [were they] thy merchants. 22 The merchants 'of Sheba and Raamah, they [were] thy merchants: they occupied in thy fairs with chief of all spices, and with all precious stones, and gold. 23 Haran, and Canneh, and Eden, the merchants of Sheba, Asshur, [and] Chilmad, [were] thy merchants; *it is difficult to point out all these places now, nor is it material.* 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; *the mariners and passengers that came to thee highly commended thee*: and thou wast replenished, and made very glorious in the midst of the seas\*.

26 Thy rowers, *thy rulers and governors*, have brought thee into great waters: the east wind hath broken thee in the midst of the seas; *Nebuchadnezzar, with his army of many nations from the east, shall devour and destroy thee.* 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, *or, rather, over 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, *shall not only tear their hair, as mourners commonly do, but pluck it entirely off*, and gird them with sackcloth, and they shall weep for thee with bitterness of heart [and] bitter wailing. 32 And in their wailing they shall take up a lamentation for thee, and lament over thee, [saying,] What [city is] like Tyrus, like the destroyed in the midst of the sea? *where is there so strong and flourishing a city, so soon and totally destroyed?* 33 When thy wares went forth out of the seas, *thy own manufactures, and what thou broughtest from other nations to trade*

\* What follows is a prophecy of her fall in a beautiful allegory. The pilots, that is, their chief counsellors and governors, who were to guide the ship of state, wrecked it, by breaking with the king of Babylon. Dreadful images of their destruction, peculiarly suited to a trading city, are used: all its wealth was to be swallowed up, and all concerned in it were undone.

*with*, 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, *that is, rival merchants*, shall hiss at thee; thou shalt be a terror, and never [shalt be] any more.

## REFLECTIONS.

1. God's ministers often see reason to lament over those, who, in their own judgments and the opinions of their carnal neighbours, are the happiest people in the world, *v. 2*. When Tyre was in all its glory, we read nothing of its religion, piety, sobriety, and charity; but much of its trade and wealth, pomp and magnificence. Yet it was in a deplorable state, and its ruin hastening on. Those who live in plenty and luxury, others admire and praise; but those who know and consider the end of the wicked, look upon them with pity, as hastening to a dreadful doom.

2. We may reflect on the wisdom and goodness of God in the various products of the earth. See the riches of divine bounty, in furnishing different countries with different commodities, serviceable to the support, comfort, or ornament of life. All are the gifts of God, though pride and luxury may abuse them. We have particular reason to rejoice in his goodness to our happy land: that it has all the necessaries of life in itself; produces the most valuable commodities; and such an abundance of them as to supply other nations.

3. Reflect on the advantages of trade and commerce. The wisdom of Providence should be observed in giving men their different inclinations to pursue their several occupations in life: particularly in teaching some the art of sailing, and giving them courage and resolution to practise it; that thus the products of one country may be transported to another; social intercourse extended, and a way opened for the spread of the gospel; which is a blessing infinitely valuable. When we feed on or wear foreign commodities, and see the value of money in exchange, let us

bless God for trade and commerce, and honour those who are employed in it ; and abhor the senseless pride of those who despise the merchant and trader.

4. What little dependance is to be placed upon the wealth and elegancies of life ! What a mournful change do we here see in the state of Tyre ! So uncertain are all the fine things in which men boast and delight. Wealthy merchants and wealthy cities come to ruin, and multitudes are involved in their fall : and such calamities will be doubly bitter to those who have lived in luxury and splendour. When we read this inventory of Tyre's wealth, it should make us thankful that we can do without most of it ; and should not be high-minded, though we have ever so much of it, for it is all fading.

5. How sad is it with a nation when its governors ruin it ; when its pilots and those at the helm run it aground. No trade and commerce, no fleets or fortress, will secure it, if there be not integrity, wisdom, and harmony in its leaders. We have therefore need to pray that God would give our commanders these qualifications, and be the defence of our land ; and in order to this, that *we may remember Him that made us, and not lightly esteem the rock of our salvation.*

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## CHAPTER XXVIII.

- This chapter contains a prophecy against the prince of Tyre, called Ethbaal, and in the Phœnician annals, Ithobalus ; he seems to have been a vain man, who affected divine honours : the prophet predicts, his doom, and then takes up a lamentation over him ; concluding with announcing the fall of Sidon the mother of Tyre, and with promises of deliverance to Israel.

1 **T**HE word of the LORD came again unto me, saying, 2 Son of man, say unto the prince of Tyrus, Thus saith the Lord GOD ; Because thine 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 ; *my perfections and power are absolute, my throne is safe and unmoveable ;* yet thou [art] a man, and not God, though thou set thine heart as the heart of God, *thou art an unequal match for the king of Baby-*

lon: 3 Behold, thou [art] wiser than Daniel\*; there is no secret that they can hide from thee; *no doubt but thou thinkest thyself wiser than Daniel; thou art able, in thy own conceit, to find out the most hidden and mysterious things*: 4 With thy wisdom and with thine understanding, *with thy skill in trade and navigation* thou hast gotten thee riches, and hast gotten gold and silver into thy treasures: 5 By thy great wisdom [and] by thy traffic hast thou increased thy riches, and thine heart is lifted up because of thy riches: 6 Therefore thus saith the LORD GOD; Because thou hast set thine heart as the heart of God; 7 Behold, therefore I will bring strangers upon thee, the terrible of the nations; *that is, Nebuchadnezzar and his army, called strangers, because they had no traffic with them, (the Chaldeans are not mentioned in the former chapter) they were terrible by their conquest of the neighbouring nations*: and they shall draw their swords against the beauty of thy wisdom, and they shall defile thy brightness; *the things wherein thou hast gloried, thy navies, army, and treasures*. 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; *thou shalt be buried in obscurity, without any funeral pomp*. 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; *thy mortality shall convince thee, if nothing else will*. 10 Thou shalt die the deaths of the uncircumcised by the hand of strangers; *the deaths of wicked and profane men, such as God inflicts upon his enemies*: for I have spoken [it,] saith the LORD GOD.

11 Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 12 Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus, and say unto him; Thus saith the LORD GOD; Thou sealest up the sun, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty; *thou thinkest thyself so wise, beautiful and magnificent, that nothing can be added to it; like full vessels, which are covered and sealed up*. 13 Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; *thou hast given thyself as great airs, as if thou wast perfect, like Adam in paradise, and lord of the whole earth like him*; 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; *thy raiment and chambers were covered with jewels and gold*: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee, *thy*

\* Daniel was at this time alive, and but a young man; yet he was so renowned for his extensive knowledge and skill in the arts of government, that to be wise as Daniel was become a proverb.

*musical instruments were fine and curious, in the day that thou wast created; in the day of thy accession or coronation.* 14 Thou [art] the anointed cherub that covereth, *art like an incarnate angel, to protect thy people; an allusion to the cherubim that covered the mercy-seat in the temple; and I have set thee [so:] thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire.* 15 Thou [wast] perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee; *thou wast at first a prince of justice and equity, but afterwards corrupt; or it may refer to his predecessors, who had been better men, as Hiram, &c.* 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 mountains of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. 17 'Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness; *thine eyes are dazzled with thy lustre; thou hast lost thy wisdom by floating on thy riches:* I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee; *thou shalt be a spectacle of misery to other princes, and a warning to them not to be proud and oppressive.* 18 Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries, *or palaces, (as the word might be rendered,) or, the judgment-seat, that should have been a refuge to the oppressed,* by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity of thy traffic; therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee\*. 19 All they that know thee among the people shall be astonished at thee: thou shalt be a terror, and never [shalt] thou [be] any more.

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, *by the justice of my judgments, and the display of my power in fulfilling my threatenings:* and they shall know that I [am] the LORD, when I shall have executed judgments in her, and shall be sanctified in her. 23 For I will send into her pestilence, and blood into her streets; and the wounded shall be judged, *or punished,*

\* Fire may here signify destruction in general, or it may refer to the burning of new Tyre by Alexander.

† Zidon was a neighbour to Tyre and dependant upon it. It was much given to idolatry, and seduced and corrupted Israel, and rejoiced in their fall.

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; *after their return from Babylon, but especially after their deliverance in the latter days, none of their enemies shall be able to vex and molest them, as formerly.* 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, *by their reformation, obedience, and their return to my worship,* 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; *I will not make utter ruin of them, but reserve a remnant, who shall return and dwell in their own land;* 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, *this refers to the case of the Israelites in the latter day, when they shall be converted and restored; and has not yet been accomplished.*

### REFLECTIONS.

1. LET us observe and lament the pride and insolence that there may be in the human heart. Too many princes, and inferior persons, like these, not only think, but say, they are gods; superior to all others, independent and absolute, *safe as the throne of God;* and look with contempt upon all below them. It is of great importance to show men that they are but men; but nothing teaches this so surely and effectually as death. *They die like men;* and it is to be wished that survivors would learn wisdom and humility by the deaths of their predecessors, and reflect that they are weak dying worms.

2. How common, yet how absurd is it, for men to think themselves wise because they are rich. Because some men by their diligence and sagacity have acquired wealth, *their hearts are lifted up,* and they treat all those as fools who despise wealth, or do not acquire it. They reckon those the wisest men who get money, by whatever means it is gotten. Such is the wisdom of this world; but *this their way is their folly;* and, if reason and grace do not first discover it to them, death certainly will; when they must

leave all their wealth behind. *Happy is the man that getteth true wisdom; who is rich toward God; for of that wealth death will not deprive him.*

3. There is much iniquity in traffic, v. 18, and all should guard against it. There is a great deal of it in this christian nation; and, it is to be feared, there are few, (especially of those who deal largely,) but are chargeable in some degree with invading the rights of others, undermining their fellow-tradesmen, oppressing their workmen and the poor, or robbing God of that time, money, and service, which is his due. This was the guilt and ruin of Tyre and its king. *They that will be rich fall into this snare.* Let us all be cautious, deal conscientiously, as in the fear of God, and see that *our merchandise and traffic be holiness to the Lord.*

4. Observe the happiness of God's Israel. Tyre and Zidon, with all their wealth, power, and magnificence, were destroyed: Israel was punished, but restored. Though God's people have not so much worldly wisdom, wealth, and honour, as others; yet Jehovah is their God; he is sanctified in them and by them; under his guardianship they are safe; and they will at length possess unmixed and everlasting felicity. *Happy is the people who are in such a case; yea, thrice happy is the people whose God is the Lord.*

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## CHAPTER XXIX.

This and the three following chapters refer to the conquest of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar; it was delivered in the same year that Pharaoh came to help Zedekiah, by whose instigations he rebelled against the king of Babylon.

1 **I**N the tenth year, in the tenth [month], in the twelfth [day] of the month, the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 2 Son of man, set thy face against Pharaoh king of Egypt\*, and prophesy against him, and against all Egypt: 3 Speak, and say, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I [am] against thee, Pharaoh king of Egypt, the great dragon that lieth in the midst of his rivers, which hath said, My river [is] mine own, and I have made [it] for myself. *In this beautiful figure he is compared to a crocodile, for*

\* Called Pharaoh-hophra by Jeremiah, (Jer. xlv. 30,) and Apries by Herodotus, L. ii.



which the Nile was famous; he used to say, *That if the Nile continued in its usual state, he neither feared man nor God; boasting of his dominion over the river, as if it was at his disposal.* 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, *I will manage thee as easily as a man does a fish when it is hooked, and all the fish of thy rivers, thy servants and soldiers, 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, *and they shall all feed on thee and thy army, as they feed on a dead crocodile\**. 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 thy 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, *or to shake; Israel made an alliance with Egypt, and depended much upon it, but they were sorely disappointed.*

8 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will bring a sword upon thee, and cut off man and beast out of thee. 9 And the land of Egypt shall be desolate and waste: and they shall know that I [am] the LORD: because he hath said, *The river [is] mine, and I have made [it].* 10 Behold, therefore I [am] against thee, and against thy rivers, *that is, against thy people, a multitude of people,* 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, *that is, from its destruction by Nebuchadnezzar;* 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, *which was about the first year of Cyrus,* will I gather the Egyptians from the people whither they were scattered: 14 And I will bring again

\* He went to help the king of Libya against the Cyrenians who had revolted from him; but his army was destroyed in the wilderness; upon which his people rose in rebellion, and he was slain by Amasis, who succeeded him. The expression of bringing him out of the river has a peculiar beauty; as the crocodile is an amphibious animal; it signifies, that he should suffer by a foreign expedition.

the captivity of Egypt, and 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; *a remarkable prophecy, which has been most astonishingly fulfilled in all the ages that have passed since it was uttered\**. 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; *they shall have no more connexion with them; for by looking to them, and being dependant upon them, they learned their idolatrous ways*: but they shall know that I [am] the Lord GOD.

17 And it came to pass in the seven and twentieth year, in the first [month,] in the first [day] of the month, *that is, seventeen years after the former†*, 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, *thirteen years' siege*, against Tyrus: every head [was] made bald *by constantly wearing their helmets*, and every shoulder [was] peeled *by carrying heavy burdens, being obliged to fill up a channel that ran between Tyre and the continent*: yet had he no wages, nor his army for Tyrus, for the service that he had served against it; *for when he had almost conquered it, the Tyrians fled away in ships with their most valuable effects, and threw what remained into the sea; so that he had no advantage*: 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; *he was serving*

\* In all that time, considerably more than two thousand years, Egypt has produced nothing great or remarkable, either in learning, wisdom, or exploit; but has continued a base, tributary kingdom, without ever having a prince of its own, being always subject to slaves or foreigners. It became first subject to the Babylonians, then to the Persians, afterwards to the Macedonians, then to the Romans; from them it passed to the Saracens, from the Saracens to the Mamalukes, or slave usurpers, and from the Mamalukes to the Ottoman empire; of which it now forms a province; governed by a Turkish Bashaw, and twenty-four Beys, or chiefs, advanced from among the slaves to the administration of public affairs; (the Egyptians being possessed with a superstitious notion, that it is decreed by fate that slaves must always rule, and the natives be subject.)—And who could foresee and foretell the events of such remote futurity, but that omniscient Spirit, who spoke by the prophets, and whose image and super-scription all their writings bear?—**Dr. SMITH.**

† This is the last prophecy of Ezekiel, delivered just when Nebuchadrezzar, having conquered Tyre, attacked Egypt.

*God, by executing his judgments upon the neighbouring nations, though he did not intend it.*

21 In that day will I cause the horn of the house of Israel to bud forth, *its glory and strength to return; and accordingly they had then some omen of their deliverance by Daniel's advancement; and I will give thee the opening of the mouth in the midst of them: and they shall know that I [am] the LORD: probably meaning that Ezekiel should have a message to deliver to Israel which would give them comfortable views of approaching deliverance; though his prophecies after this are not recorded.*

### REFLECTIONS.

1. WE may infer from hence the vanity of self-love and applause. Something like Pharaoh's insolent language, *v. 3., My river is mine own, and I have made it for myself*, is very common among men; they express great pride in what they call their property; this substance, trade, or estate, is mine, for I have raised it; this house is mine, for I have built it. They forget that God gave them power to acquire any one of these; that when they have gotten it, it is still his, and they are but stewards. *He may do what he will with his own; and will judge them for all the wealth and honour they possess.*

2. See how dangerous confidence in man, or in any earthly thing, is. Whatever we trust to, while God is forgotten or neglected, is a reed that will disappoint our expectations, and not only break under us, but pierce and wound us. It is kind in God to take away the grounds of our carnal confidence, *v. 16.* His design is to reform us, and there is often no other way to do it. *Happy is he, whose trust is in God; who makes the Lord his confidence; for his foot shall not be shaken.*

3. No work done for God shall go unrewarded, *v. 20.* When even wicked men answer his purpose, they shall have their reward; a worldly reward indeed it will be, for that is all they desire. This is one reason of the prosperity of the wicked. God rewards them for some virtues they practise; some service they do him, and some use they are of in the world. No one shall have reason to complain of injustice from him. How well then will he reward those who, from a religious principle, intend and labour to serve him. *God is not unrighteous to forget our works of faith and our labours of love.*

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## CHAPTER XXX.

This chapter describes with great elegance and force the ruin of Egypt and all her allies by Nebuchadnezzar, and the distress of the principal cities of Egypt on that occasion.

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, Woe worth the day! *or, Alas for 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, *to punish Egypt and her allies.* 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; *many shall be carried captive, and her forts and government shall be overthrown.* 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; *neighbouring countries, and the Israelites that take shelter among them shall suffer with them.* 6 Thus saith the LORD; They also that uphold Egypt, *its governors,* 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; *in the course of my providence I will send the news to them of the desolation of Egypt, which shall fill them with terror;* 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, *that is, the Nile, on the overflowing of which their plenty and prosperity depended; the river, of which Pharaoh boasted, and in which he put his confidence;* and sell the land into the hand of the

wicked: and I will make the land waste, and all that is therein, by the hand of strangers: I the LORD have spoken [it.] 13 Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will also destroy the idols, and I will cause [their] images to cease out of Noph, or *Memphis*; *idolatry was their principal sin, and this the chief seat of it*; and there shall be no more a prince of the land of Egypt, *that is, a prince of the royal family*; *it was ruled by foreigners ever after*: and I will put a fear in the land of Egypt. 14 And I will make Pathros, or *Thebais*, desolate, and will set fire in Zoan, or *Tanis, the metropolis in the time of Moses*, and will execute judgments in No, or *Thebes*. 15 And I will pour my fury upon Sin, *the same with Pelusium, the strength of Egypt, or, as heathen writers call it, the key 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, *Heliopolis*, and of Pibeseth, *Bubastu*, shall fall by the sword: and these [cities] shall go into captivity. 18 At Tephaphnehes, or *Daphnæ Pelusiaca*, (*where the prophet Jeremiah is said to have been put to death*), also the day shall be darkened, when I shall break there the yokes of Egypt, *their oppressive yokes upon their neighbours*: 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.

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

the land of Egypt. 26 And I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and disperse them among the countries; and they shall know that I [am] the LORD. *Accordingly Nebuchadnezzar smote Pharaoh-nechoh's army in the fourth year of Jehoiachim, and took all that pertained to him, from the river of Egypt to the river Euphrates.* See 2 Kings xxiv. 7.

### REFLECTION.

THE great practical use of this chapter, is to learn from it to entertain the highest ideas of the power and dominion of the great God; to reverence and adore his influence over the greatest men; and the ease with which he uses them as his instruments, to bring about his own purposes. Egypt was the most ancient, potent, flourishing kingdom in the world; and yet in what majestic language does God speak, *of breaking it in pieces*, and making it for the future base and contemptible! He breaks the arms of one prince, and strengthens the arms of another, as he pleaseth: puts his sword into the hands of one prince, (what a sublime idea!) and cuts off the spirit of another. *Who can stand before him when once he is angry? Who would not fear thee, O King of nations!*

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### CHAPTER XXXI.

The prophet describes to Pharaoh the fall of the king of Nineveh, and the destruction of Egypt, under the image of a fair cedar of Lebanon, once tall and majestic, but now cut down and withered.

1 **AND** it came to pass in the eleventh year, in the third [month,] *that is, about a month before Jerusalem was destroyed,* 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? thou thinkest no prince equal to thyself,* but 3 Behold, the Assyrian [was] a cedar in Lebanon with fair branches, and with a shadowing shroud, and of an high stature; and his top was among the thick boughs; *it overtopped the most flourishing trees, it exceeded all other kingdoms.* 4 The waters made him great, the deep set him up on high with her rivers running round about his plants, and

sent out all her little rivers unto all the trees of the field; *he had a wide dominion, great revenues, a large trade, and sent out colonies to distant countries.* 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; *they were either dependant upon him, in alliance with him, or tributary to him.* 7 Thus was he fair in his greatness, in the length of his branches: for his root was by great waters. 8 The cedars in the garden of God could not hide him: the fir trees were not like his boughs, and the chestnut trees were not like his branches; nor any tree in the garden of God was like unto him in his beauty; *no prince was like him for greatness, power, and magnificence.* 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, *all the kings of the east, envied him.* 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 all 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 *like a tree cut down and withered; his provinces shall be taken away, and those under his protection removed.* 13 Upon his ruin shall all the fowls of the heaven remain, and all the beasts of the field shall be upon his branches, *shall browse upon them and destroy them.* 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; *or rather, nor any trees that drink water; the design of all was, that nations might take warning, and kings not be proud, even those that were most powerful and glorious,* 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

\* Cyaxares, king of Media, and Nabopolassar, king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar's father, took Nineveh, and destroyed the Assyrian empire about twenty-three years before this, and so fulfilled the prophecy of Nahum and Zephaniah.

to the pit; *death hath levelled and equalled them all.*—*The following verses are an elegant description of the terror that seized the king of Assyria's allies in the day of his fall.* 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; *the waters stopped their course to lament his calamity:* and I caused Lebanon to mourn for him, and all the trees of the field fainted for him; *there was a general mourning for the fall of so great a monarch, so powerful an empire; and a general cessation of trade and navigation.* 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 the trees that drink water, shall be comforted in the nether parts of the earth; *other princes over whom he had triumphed, seeing that he is brought as low as they, shall be comforted.* See Isaiah xiv. 8—10. They also went down into hell with him unto [them that be] slain with the sword; and [they that were] his arm, *his strength and his allies,* [that] dwelt under his shadow in the midst of the heathen.

18 To whom art thou, *O king of Egypt,* thus like in glory and in greatness among the trees of Eden unto the nether parts of the earth: thou shalt lie in the midst of the uncircumcised, *shalt die a shameful and accursed death,* with [them that be] slain by the sword. This [is] Pharaoh and all his multitude, saith the Lord GOD; *this is an exact representation of their destruction.*

## REFLECTIONS.

1. SEE how dangerous and precarious earthly greatness is. It is dangerous, because it is apt to lift up the hearts of men; their minds rise with their condition; they compare themselves with others, and are ready to despise and oppress all their inferiors. But would they consider that it is God who makes them fair and great, that if they abuse their wealth and power, he can easily, and will certainly, pull them and all their multitude down; it might prevent their being proud and high-minded. When they fall, many fall with them: their flatterers and attendants leave them; and they generally fall unlamented. Let us not envy their condition; but make the shadow of the Almighty our confidence, and then we shall dwell safely.



2. The fall of others should be a warning to us, *v.* 14., that we do not *trust in uncertain riches*, or showy splendour. If all the advantages of a flourishing trade and a good fortune, are lost by vice and imprudence, it should teach us to *guide our affairs with discretion*; *not to seek great things*; but diligently and contentedly to pursue our proper business, and humbly wait upon God for his blessing. The death of others should be a warning to us. The great and the good die like other men; and *lie down alike in the dust*. Let the thought quicken us to be *always ready, since we know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of man cometh*.

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## CHAPTER XXXII.

Contains a lamentation for the dreadful fall of Egypt.

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, *or rather a crocodile, for a whale has no feet*: and thou camest forth with thy rivers, and troubledst the waters with thy feet, and fouledst their rivers; *hast troubled thy own and the neighbouring nations*. 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, *which is large enough to enclose thee, and strong enough to secure thee*. 4 Then will I leave thee upon the land, I will cast thee forth upon the open field, and will cause all the fowls of the heaven to remain upon thee, and I will fill the beasts of the whole earth with thee. 5 And I will lay thy flesh, *that is, the flesh of thy soldiers that shall be slain*, upon the mountains, and fill the valleys with thy height, *with thy large armies, whereof thou didst boast*. 6 I will also water with thy blood, *with the blood of thy forces*, the land wherein 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 ; *figurative expressions, denoting the confusion and ruin of the nation.* 9 I will also vex the hearts of many people, of those nations that are in alliance with thee, and in dependance upon thee, when I shall bring thy destruction, such a destruction as hath befallen thee, 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, those who admired thy grandeur and power shall be amazed 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 ; for who can think himself secure when Egypt is fallen ?

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, the horses, wherein they trusted, or their great men, from beside the great waters ; neither shall the foot of man trouble them any more, nor the hoofs of beasts trouble them. 14 Then will I make their waters deep, and cause their rivers to run like oil, saith the Lord GOD ; *there shall be a face of universal melancholy, as if the river Nile, which was peculiarly rapid, had become a stagnant pool, its motion being hardly to be perceived.* 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, the people of the neighbouring countries, shall lament her : they shall lament for her, [even] for Egypt, and for all her multitude, saith the Lord GOD.

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, *declare with authority that they shall be cast 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 ; *a beautiful passage, in which God leads the prophet as it were through some stately burying-place, and points out the tombs of many princes.* 19 Whom dost thou pass in beauty ? what is there so peculiarly glorious in thee, that thou shouldst be exempted from the fate of other monarchs ? 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 *to the grave, like dead carcasses.* 21 The strong among the mighty shall speak to him out of the midst of hell with them that help him; *the spirits of deceased tyrants and their subjects shall meet him, and congratulate his coming:* they are gone down, they lie uncircumcised, slain by the sword. 22 Asshur [is] there and all her company; *the famous, warlike, victorious kings of Assyria:* his graves [are] about him: all of them slain, fallen by the sword: 23 Whose graves, *like lesser graves about the monuments of persons of quality,* are set in the sides of the pit, and her company is round about her grave: all of them slain, fallen by the sword, which caused terror in the land of the living. 24 There [is] Elam, *or Persia, which was conquered by Nebuchadnezzar,* 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 multitude: 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; *the Scythian kings and leaders:* 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; *an allusion to the custom of burying princes with their armour; which was carried in funeral procession, and interred with them,* but their iniquities shall be upon their bones, *the punishment of their great cruelty shall follow them after death, and cause their bones to be cast out upon the earth,* 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,

\* The Scythians made an inroad upon the Medes, and lived some years by plundering that country; but they were destroyed by Cyaxares, and did not die in an honourable manner in the field, but were slain by a stratagem, while drunk at a feast.

and with them that go down to the pit, *though, being of the seed of Abraham, they had been circumcised.* 30 There [be] the princes of the north, *the Tyrians*, all of them, and all the Zidonians, which are gone down with the slain; with their terror they are ashamed of their might; and they lie uncircumcised with [them that be] slain by the sword, and bear their shame with them that go down to the pit. 31 Pharaoh shall see them, and shall be comforted over all his multitude, [even] Pharaoh and all his army slain by the sword, saith the Lord GOD; *it shall be some satisfaction that other great princes have been slain, other great armies routed, and other great nations destroyed.* 32 For I have caused my terror in the land of the living; *he had been the terror of the mighty; but now I have caused my terror to fall upon him:* 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.

### REFLECTIONS.

1. OBSERVE the sad effects of the fall of great nations. Tyrannical, ambitious princes disquiet the world, and cause trouble and terror to their neighbours: but *their day will come to fall.* Some shall be vexed, others astonished, and others lament at their fall. The neighbouring nations shall become quiet; and other princes and states rise out of their ruins. So changing is the state of this world, and so little are its grandeur, power, and connexion with the great and mighty, to be depended upon.

2. We may hence take occasion to reflect on the universal empire of death: he makes no distinction, either of rich, powerful, or mighty, though they have been terrors to others. Princes are buried in pomp, heroes with their achievements; some honoured with monuments and inscriptions; others cast into common graves, or left unburied; but princes, and all the multitude, are destroyed by this universal conqueror. Death, the king of terrors, destroys the monarchs, as well as the meaner ones, of the earth. Happy those, who can by faith look beyond the grave; and, whether buried, or not; with monuments, or without, can *rejoice in hope of future glory, and a resurrection to eternal life.*

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

God had told Ezekiel that he should be dumb, that is, have no more prophetic revelations to Israel, till his prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem was accomplished. In the mean time he prophesied against other nations, and might preach to the Israelites as a common minister; but now Jerusalem was taken, his mouth was opened, and his commission as a prophet was renewed. He is directed what answer to make to the cavils of infidelity and impiety; to vindicate the ways of God; and foretell the utter desolation of all Judea.

1 **AGAIN** the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 2 Son of man, speak to the children of thy people, and say unto them, When I bring the sword upon a land, if the people of the land take a man of their coasts, and set him for their watchman: 3 If when he seeth the sword come upon the land, he blow the trumpet, and warn the people; 4 Then whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not warning; if the sword come, and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head; *he is the cause of his own destruction.* 5 He heard the sound of the trumpet, and took not warning; his blood shall be upon him: but he that taketh warning shall deliver his soul. 6 But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, *if he acts treacherously, or only shifts for his own safety,* and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take [any] person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand. 7 So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. 8 When I say unto the wicked, O wicked [man,] thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked [man] shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. 9 Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul.

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? as if they had said, *Some time ago you brought us comfortable messages, set before us deliverance and mercy; but instead of that, judgments are increasing upon us, and we pine away; how then can we believe your better messages? A foolish objection, for the prophet had plainly told them that deliverance should not yet come, that many previous calamities should happen, and that only a remnant should be preserved.* 11 Say unto them, [As] I live, saith the LORD GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel? 12 Therefore, thou son of man, say unto the children of thy people, The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression: as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall thereby in the day that he turneth from his wickedness; neither shall the righteous be able to live for [his righteousness] in the day that he sinneth. 13 When I shall say to the righteous, [that] he shall surely live; if he trust to his own righteousness, *that is, to its merit, or his own strength, and thinks himself so well established that he shall not fall, and after this he commit iniquity, all his righteousness shall not be remembered; but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it.* 14 Again, when I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; if he turn from his sin, and do that which is lawful and right; 15 [If] the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had 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; *I need only again state the case, it carries its own evidence with it to unprejudiced minds.* 18 When the righteous turneth from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, he shall even die thereby. 19 But if the wicked turn from his wickedness, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall live thereby. 20 Yet ye say, The way of the LORD is not equal. O ye house of Israel, I will judge you every one after his ways.

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

\* Dr. Kennicott says the *eleventh* year.

is smitten\*. 22 Now the hand of the LORD was upon me in the evening, *the evening before he received the message in the former part of this chapter*, 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, *Ishmael's party, that murdered Gedaliah, who was appointed governor by the king of Babylon; Ishmael perhaps intended to make himself an independent king, therefore they speak*, saying, Abraham was one, and he inherited the land: but we [are] many; the land is given us for inheritance; *Abraham from one, became many, and so we, though but few, shall people the land and be able to defend it.* 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, *injure others with the sword, and trust to it*, ye work abomination, and ye defile every one his neighbour's wife: and shall ye possess the land? 27 Say thou thus unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; [As] I live, surely they that are in the wastes, *or desolate cities*, 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, *in artificial or natural fortresses*, shall die of the pestilence. 28 For I will lay the land most desolate, and the pomp of her strength, *her rich, magnificent, strong places*, 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; *all this came to pass, many of them fled to Egypt, and were lost there.*

30 Also, thou son of man, the children of thy people still are talking against thee, *or rather, concerning 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; *that is, what the prophet has foretold, what has come to pass, and what he saith upon that occasion.* 31 And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee [as] my people, and they hear thy words,

\* This was a year and five months after the city was taken; so important a conquest must have been heard of at Babylon long before; but, in chap. xxiv. 26., God told the prophet that he should hear of it from an eye-witness; and here one comes and gives him a particular and affecting account of the dreadful scene.

but they will not do them: for with their mouth they show 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; *they love to attend thy preaching, as they like to attend a concert of music; it is an agreeable entertainment to them.* 33 And when this cometh to pass, (lo, it will come, or, lo, it is come,) then shall they know that a prophet hath been among them; *not an orator, or a musician, but a prophet, whom they should have seriously regarded, and all whose words I will confirm.*

### REFLECTIONS.

1. MINISTERS have here repeated and solemn warnings by the prophet. God's ministers are employed to denounce his wrath against the workers of iniquity; and even to address themselves to particular sinners, saying, *O wicked man!* though without partiality and private affection; and this under an awful penalty. Allow them therefore to act thus, and blame them not for their faithfulness; though they may hurt your consciences, and displease your lusts. And it is a great encouragement, that they will deliver their own souls, though sinners will not be reformed.

2. We here see the terms on which sinners stand with the great God. His word gives encouragement to the wicked to repent and return; he has said and sworn that *he hath no pleasure in the death of a sinner*, and has taken every method, the most gracious and wonderful, to show his reconcileableness. If they perish the fault is their own. They must justify God, even in their destruction. Here is also a caution to the righteous. If they become carnal, worldly-minded, and sensual, their righteousness will be forgotten. They are in great danger of trusting to it; of thinking that its merit will atone for irregularities; or that they are so strong, that temptations cannot hurt them; and therefore they venture upon them. How many who have made a fair profession, appeared serious and good, are ruined by pride and conceit! *Let him therefore that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.*

3. The behaviour of these captives to Ezekiel, is too frequently imitated now, and christian ministers perceive and lament it, and are greatly discouraged by it. They seemed to be a good sort of



people; were regular in their attendance on public worship; were serious in their deportment; there was no sleeping, laughing, or other indecent behaviour there; they pretended great respect to the prophet, and admired his preaching. But here their hypocrisy appeared, this was their guilt and ruin, that they would not do what he said. So, many now come regularly to public worship, seem pleased with their ministers, and show them respect, but will not do their words, will not break off their sins, nor attempt to mortify their lusts; but continue as sensual, worldly-minded, proud and passionate, as ever. God knows with what principles and ends men attend the preaching of the word; and if this be our character, we shall have very different thoughts of ministers and their preaching ere it be long: we shall see that they are not sent and ordained to amuse and entertain us; but to reform our vices, and to regulate our tempers and lives; and God will accomplish their words, and punish all hypocrites and unbelievers. *Be ye doers of the word, therefore, and not hearers only, deceiving your own souls.*

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## CHAPTER XXXIV.

Contains a charge against the shepherds, and encouragement to the flock.

1 **AND** the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 2 Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, *that is, the governors, including the king, princes, rulers, and priests,* prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD unto the shepherds; Woe [be] to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks? *should they not seek the welfare of their people?* 3 Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed; *Ye enrich yourselves with the spoil of the wealthy:* 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; *instead of supporting and relieving the distressed, you have used them cruelly, exercising both civil*

*and ecclesiastical tyranny.* 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; *they were driven to other countries, and became a prey to their enemies.* 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.]

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; *seduced them to idolatry, and destroyed them;* 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, *I will call them to a strict account,* and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; *this would have been no affliction, but it follows,* 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; *I will deprive them of all their authority, wealth, and power.*

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; *that is, in the day of public calamity; though the shepherds have neglected their duty, I will take care of the flock, and will deliver and restore them.* 13 And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel, by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country. 14 I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be: there shall they lie in a good fold, and [in] a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel. 15 I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord GOD. 16 I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up [that which was] broken, and will strengthen that which was sick: but I will destroy the fat and the strong, *those who are proud and oppressive;* I will feed them with judgment; *will deal with them according to their deserts.* 17 And [as for] you, O my flock, thus

saieth the Lord GOD; Behold, I judge between cattle and cattle, between the rams and the he-goats; *the rich and great men, who were oppressors, though not governors.* 18 [Seemeth it] a small thing unto you to have eaten up the good pasture, but ye must tread down with your feet the residue of your pastures? and to have drunk of the deep waters, but ye must foul the residue with your feet? *not satisfied with enjoying my blessings yourselves, must you plunder and injure those below you?* 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; *they have nothing but your leavings to support themselves and their families with.*

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, *that is, Christ, the son of David; I will give him the throne of his father David,* he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd; *he shall preside over my people.* 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, *they shall have peace with me and one another, and enjoy all blessings,* and I will cause the evil beasts, *all persecutors and oppressors,* to cease out of the land: and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods; *and thus be delivered, not only from danger, but from fear.* 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; *they shall enjoy my ordinances and presence, and all spiritual good.* 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, *their spiritual bondage,* 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, *that is, Christ, the Branch, who shall be famous, not only among the Jews, but all over the world,* and they shall be no more con-

sumed with hunger in the land, neither bear the shame of the heathen any more ; *they shall not be reproached by the heathen as the forsaken of God.* 30 Thus, *by these blessings and the fulfilment of my promises*, 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, the flock of my pasture, [are] men, [and] I [am] your God, saith the Lord GOD. *These concluding words explain the figure ; it refers to men and their governors, to Israel in particular, God's professing people, who were his flock.*

### REFLECTIONS.

1. WE hence learn that God will call the greatest of men to account for their iniquities. The shepherds of Israel, who were superior to the flock, tyrannized over them, and had no one to oppose them ; but they are here censured and threatened by the supreme Ruler. Their greatness and authority, though it set them above the reach of human justice, could not secure them from his. He is against them, and will require the flock at their hands ; will take away their abused power, and punish their injustice. May all the shepherds of our British Israel consider this.

2. See how highly God is displeased with those who are tyrannical, oppressive, and uncharitable, whatever their rank may be ; he is not only against the shepherds of Israel, but the rams and he-goats of the flock. There are many tyrannical parents, husbands, masters, and landlords, who fall under this sentence ; and all who rule others with cruelty and rigour ; who enrich themselves by the oppression of their workmen and servants, and the spoil of the poor ; who never give of their superfluities to the needy, but, on the contrary, imbitter what little they have ; men, who live in pomp and ease, but never care for the sufferings of others, and will not supply the poor, nor strengthen the weak, nor heal the sick ; men, who in public trusts consult their private interests more than the public good ; all these *God will judge ; and they shall have judgment without mercy who have showed no mercy.*

3. Let us rejoice that God hath raised up the Lord Jesus Christ, as the shepherd of his flock. *He is the good shepherd :* he came to redeem the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and gather the Gentiles into his fold : and he feeds his flock in good pastures ; his word, ordinances, and Spirit, are showers of bless-

ings. He delivers them from wild beasts ; from sin, Satan, and death ; he strengthens the weak, heals the diseased, *carries the lambs in his bosom, and gently leads those that are with young.* He is the good shepherd, who laid down his life for the sheep ; and he will defend his church, though under-shepherds should be unfaithful and negligent. Let us then commit ourselves to his care ; hear his voice ; follow his steps ; and trust his power and grace : then he will feed and guard our souls, and lead us to his heavenly hill. So he has declared ; *I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.*

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### CHAP. XXXV. and CHAP. XXXVI. 1—15.

We have here the judgment of mount Seir, or Edom, for their hatred of Israel, and the temporal state of Israel immediately after the captivity.

1 **MOREOVER** the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 2 Son of man, set thy face against mount Seir, and prophesy 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 mine 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 : since thou hast not hated blood, *but delighted in it, even blood shall pursue thee ; others shall be as eager to shed thine as thou hast been to shed theirs.* 7 Thus will I make mount Seir most desolate, and cut off from it him that passeth out and him that returneth ; *there shall be no travellers there.* 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

\* The old hatred between their ancestors, Esau and Jacob, continued between their posterity ; and when the iniquity of Israel was full, and judgment was come upon them, then in a cowardly manner they fell upon them, and took advantage of their weak state to injure them.

cities shall not return : and ye shall know that I [am] the LORD \*.  
 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 ; *hoped to possess the whole in time, though it was the Lord's peculiar inheritance* : 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, *were guilty of blasphemy against the God of Israel, as well as of unkindness to them*, and have multiplied your words against me : I have heard [them.] 14 Thus saith the Lord GOD ; When the whole earth rejoiceth, *that is, the whole land of Canaan, or other nations restored by Cyrus*, 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.

CHAP. XXXVI. 1 Also, thou son of man, prophesy unto the mountains of Israel, *to the inhabitants of them, and the country round about, as mount Seir and all Idumea, as in the former chapter ; or rather, (the country being desolated), he is commanded to address the mountains*, and say, Ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the LORD : 2 Thus saith the Lord GOD ; Because the enemy hath 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, *a by-word and a reproach to them* : 4 Therefore, ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord GOD ; Thus saith the Lord GOD to the mountains, and to the hills, to the rivers, and to the valleys, to the desolate wastes, and to the cities that are forsaken, which became a prey and derision to the residue of the heathen that [are] round

\* This as remarkably accomplished ; they were driven out of their own country, and the neighbouring nation, and afterwards settled in the southern parts of Judea : the time of the Maccabees were conquered, and forced to be circumcised and become Jews. By which means they were incorporated and lost in that nation, so that we hear no more of them.

about; particularly to those who were left after the general desolation that was made by the king of Babylon; 5 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Surely in the fire of my jealousy have I spoken against the residue of the heathen, and against all Idumea, which have appointed my land into their possession, with the joy of all [their] heart, with despiteful minds, to cast it out for a prey. 6 Prophecy, therefore, concerning the land of Israel, and say unto the mountains, and to the hills, to the rivers, and to the valleys, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I have spoken in my jealousy and in my fury, because ye have borne the shame of the heathen: 7 Therefore, thus saith the Lord GOD; I have lifted up mine hand, Surely the heathen that [are] about you, they shall bear their shame. 8 But ye, O mountains of Israel, ye shall shoot forth your branches, and yield your fruit to my people of Israel; for they are at hand to come *from Babylon to their own land*. 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, *the castles and fortified places*, 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, O mountains, [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, *thou art an unlucky country, always afflicted with one judgment or another*, and hast bereaved thy nations; 14 Therefore thou shalt devour men no more, neither bereave thy nations any more, saith the Lord GOD. 15 Neither will I cause [men] to hear in thee the shame of the heathen any more, neither shalt thou bear the reproach of the people any more, neither shalt thou cause thy nations to fall any more, saith the Lord GOD. *These promises were designed to animate the people to leave their comfortable settlements in Babylon, where most of them were born, and to return to their own land.*

## REFLECTIONS.

1. SEE the confirmation of Solomon's remark, that *he who is glad at calamity shall not go unpunished*. The Edomites

rejoiced in Israel's ruin, because they expected to possess their land; but God here informs them how much he resented and would punish their cruelty and selfishness. Thus, when men rejoice at the sufferings of others, when they are likely to reap some advantages by it, it is highly displeasing to the God of love. When men suffer for their sins, they are not to be insulted; and the loss and calamity of others, instead of giving us an ill-natured pleasure, should excite our pity, and make us less fond of the world, since its enjoyments are so precarious. God will give persecutors blood to drink; and make those who rejoice in the desolations of others, desolate.

2. We are taught that God heareth and remembereth all our words; especially those which we have spoken against him, or his people, v. 12, 13.; and particularly, proud, boasting, insolent words, which show a weak, vain, and sinful heart. It is a remarkable phrase, *ch. xxxvi. 3., The lips of talkers.* There are many who deserve that name; have something to say to, or of, every body; to show their wit, vent their spleen, or rattle out mere impertinence. To prevent these irregularities of the tongue, let us remember that God heareth our words, and observes how they have been multiplied: and that *by our words we shall be justified or condemned.* Let this engage us to set a watch at the door of our lips: for if any man among you seemeth to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, that man's religion is vain.

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#### CHAP. XXXVI. 16, to the end.

This part of the chapter refers to the spiritual state of the Jews, and their conversion, and restoration to their own land, in the latter days.

16 **M**OREOVER the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,  
 17 Son of man, when the house of Israel dwelt in their own land, they defiled it by their own way and by their doings, *though it was a good and a holy land*: their way was before me, as the uncleanness of a removed woman, *who could not enter God's courts*; so they were unfit for religious services with idolatrous and polluted hearts. 18 Wherefore I poured my fury upon them for the blood that they had shed upon the land, and for their idols [wherewith] they had polluted it; *murder and idolatry were their two*



*greatest sins, and the true cause of their misery*: 19 And I scattered them among the heathen, and they were dispersed through the countries: according to their way and according to their doings I judged them. 20 And when they entered unto the heathen, whither they went, they profaned my holy name, when they said to them, These [are] the people of the LORD, and are gone forth out of his land; *by their ill behaviour they have given occasion to the heathen to say, that Jehorah has done as little to defend his people as other gods have to defend theirs, and cannot make good his grant to them.* 21 But I had pity for mine holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the heathen, whither they went. 22 Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the LORD GOD; I do not [this] for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went. 23 And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I [am] the LORD, saith the LORD GOD, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes; *that is, manifest my perfections, and give glorious proofs of my power and goodness.* 24 For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. 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; *an allusion to legal pollutions, for which sprinkling was appointed under the law.* 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 an heart of flesh; *a different and more excellent disposition, and all that is vile shall be taken away.* 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; *shall no more be upbraided with the barrenness of a land, relating to the fruitfulness of which so many promises have been given you.* 31 Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that [were] not good, and shall lothe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations;

*divine mercies shall increase your repentance and self-abasement.*  
 32 Not for your sakes do I [this,] saith the Lord God, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel; *a remarkable phrase, intimating how prone men in general are, and the Jews especially were, to be conceited of their own merit.* 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;] *a promise yet to be fulfilled, as their country is still desolate in general, and has few inhabitants.* 37 Thus saith the Lord God; I will yet [for] this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do [it] for them; *it is their duty to ask these mercies, and I will incline them to pray, and give them gracious answers: 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; *the inhabitants shall be as numerous as the flocks which were driven up to the temple at the solemn feasts to be sacrificed: and they shall know that I [am] the Lord.*

### REFLECTIONS.

1. How sad is it when God's professing people occasion his name to be blasphemed! The Israelites profaned his name among the heathen; to whom they should have been teachers of religion, and patterns of good works. Thus when men that profess religion and devotedness to God are vicious, slaves to the world, dishonest in their dealings, false to their word, proud, and ill-natured, they cause religion to be evil spoken of. Let us therefore be tender of the honour of God and religion; and behave so that we may *adorn the doctrine of God, and our Saviour Jesus-Christ.*

2. God's reasons for mercy are drawn from himself. It is a remarkable expression, v. 21., *I had pity for my holy name; not*

*for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord.* The Jews were apt to be confident in their great privileges; therefore so much is said to humble them. It is a sin which easily besets even the best of men, to over-rate their own virtues and merit. But God has no need of us; *when we have done all, we are unprofitable servants.* His mercy is free; and the deepest humility becomes us. It is the design of his gospel to *hide pride from man*: to lead us to the merits of Christ, and to seek acceptance through him; never boasting of ourselves, but glorying only in the Lord.

3. Let us see and own the hand of God in all the supplics and comforts of life. He multiplieth men and beasts, and causeth the earth to yield its increase. There is a remarkable expression to this purpose in v. 29., *I will call for the corn.* Plenty comes at God's call; and he can as easily take it away. We need often to be reminded of his universal providence; that we may be thankful for his bounty; *and whether we eat, or drink, or whatsoever we do, all should be done to the glory of God.*

4. We see the necessity of conversion, in order to be holy and happy. It is not sufficient that men leave off some vices, and practise some virtues; and that their external behaviour be sober and regular; they must have *a new heart*; an entire change, a religious principle within; *a heart of flesh*; tender, humble, tractable to the commands, and submissive to the will, of God. Without this, they will never walk in his statutes, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. We should therefore examine ourselves, whether such a change has passed in us; and earnestly pray that God would *create in us a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within us.*

5. God's goodness and grace to us should fill us with godly sorrow and shame. The nature of true repentance is here pointed out; it arises from a remembrance of sin; and consists in loathing ourselves, and in being grieved and displeased at our sinful conduct. The more we see of God's purity, and the more we experience of his mercy, the more reason we have to be humbled before him. *Let the goodness of God then lead us to such repentance,* and preserve us from returning again to folly.

6. God will be sought unto for the mercies which he hath promised. His promises are designed to quicken, not to supersede, our prayers and endeavours. He commands us to seek him, and it is fit that we should; as it is giving him glory by our faith in his promises, acknowledging our own unworthiness, and is a means of bringing our minds to a proper frame to receive his

favours. Let us then, while we believe his promises, continue in prayer for the accomplishment of them, and watch thereunto with all perseverance.

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## CHAPTER XXXVII.

This chapter treats of the same subject, in a beautiful and significant vision of the resurrection of dry bones, and promises of the general restoration of the whole house of Israel, who shall enjoy both the land of Canaan, and the blessings of the gospel, under the Messiah.

1 **T**HE hand of the LORD was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the LORD, *that is, in a vision or trance*, and set me down in the midst of the valley which [was] full of bones,  
 2 And caused me to pass by them round about: and, behold, [there were] very many in the open valley; and, lo, [they were] very dry; *as if some great battle had been fought there, and the bones were left unburied; which supposes the Jews to be in as hopeless a condition as such bones, and as unlikely to be recovered.*  
 3 And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord GOD, thou knowest; *if thou art pleased to command them, they may.* 4 Again he said unto me, Prophecy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. 5 Thus saith the Lord GOD unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live: 6 And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I [am] the LORD. 7 So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold a shaking, *or rattling noise, like that of bones rushing together*, and the bones came together, bone to his bone; *that is, to its proper place in the body to which it belonged; for the bones of the human body are so nicely fitted, that those of one body will not suit another.* 8 And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above: but [there was] no breath in them. 9 Then said he unto me, Prophecy unto the wind, prophecy, son of man, and say to the wind, *or breath*, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they

may live; *or, breathe the vital principle that unites soul and body.*

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; *in a posture of defence, and ready for service.*

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; *referring to their present despairing condition, they say, We are banished for ever from one another and our land.*

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 up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel; *you shall have liberty, ability, and inclination to return. This is illustrated by Rom. xi. 15., where the apostle speaks of their return as life from the dead.* 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, *a spirit of repentance, piety, and zeal,* 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.

15 The word of the LORD came again unto me, saying, 16 Moreover, thou son of 'man, take thee one stick, and write upon it, For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions; *that is, Benjamin, and others that returned with him:* then take another stick, and write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, *the head of the ten tribes,* and [for] all the house of Israel his companions: 17 And join them one to another into one stick, *put them end to end;* and they shall, *in a miraculous manner,* become one in thine hand. 18 And when the children of thy people shall speak unto thee, saying, Wilt thou not show 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 mine hand; *they shall be united in one body, and also in judgment and affection and religious disposition.* 20 And the sticks whereon thou writest shall be in thine 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 ; *they shall no longer be separate kingdoms, nor have separate interests* : 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 ; *they shall be delivered from places of temptation, and live in perfect harmony*. 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 ; *they shall never apostatize, as a nation, any more*. 26 Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them, *that is, the gospel covenant*, it shall be an everlasting covenant with them : and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. 27 My tabernacle also shall be with them : yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people †. 28 And the heathen shall know that I the LORD do sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore ; *that I am reconciled to them, and have again owned them as my people*.

## REFLECTIONS.

1. THIS first vision should comfort us when religion is at the lowest ebb, and circumstances are most discouraging. What was more unlikely than a resurrection of dry bones ? and what a more evident proof of a divine power ? By that therefore God would represent the recovery of Israel ; and thus can he raise dead souls to life. Ministers only prophesy to them ; God must command

\* This intimates that the ten tribes are still in being, and shall be recovered at last.

† This is applied by the apostle to the christian church, to the establishment of christian worship in it, and the tokens of the divine presence and favour, 2 Cor. vi. 16.

the spirit of life to enter into them. He can raise his own cause, when sunk very low, when human wisdom, piety, and zeal are nonplussed; if he exerts his own power, the most wonderful effects will be produced. When there seems to be nothing but spiritual death upon his churches he can revive them; for *all things are of God*. The consideration of this should support our faith and hope; and animate our prayers that he would *revive his work in the midst of the years*.

2. It is very happy when peace and union are restored between those who have been at variance. We have here a beautiful description of the union of Israel and Judah. There shall be no clashing distinction or separation between them. Their common union to Christ their king, shall heal all their differences. It is happy when clashing and envying between nations, churches, brethren, or neighbours, cease; when they are joined in affection, if not in judgment. God is to be sought unto by prayer for so desirable an event; and every one should contribute his part to it, by *laying aside envy, malice, wrath, evil-speaking, and evil-surmising; passing by transgressions, and yielding for peace' sake*: and when this effect is produced, the hand of God is to be thankfully acknowledged in it. For *behold! how good and how pleasant a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity: and blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God*.

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## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

The sublime prophecy contained in this, and the following, chapter, concerning Israel's victory over Gog and Magog, relates to a period still very distant, and is therefore very obscure. It begins with representing a prodigious armament of many nations combined together under the conduct of Gog, (supposed, with great probability, to mean the Turks, who originally sprung from the Tartars, a race of Scythians, who had their origin from Magog the son of Japheth,) all together attacking the Jews, after having been for some time re-settled in their land consequent to their return from the general dispersion. These enemies are represented as making themselves sure of the spoil, and mercantile nations as already come to their camp to purchase it, (1—4.) In this critical juncture, when the cloud is ready to burst over Israel, God appears to execute, by terrible judgments, the vengeance threatened, against these enemies of his people. The prophet, in terms borrowed from the human passions, describes with awful emphasis his fury, as coming up to his face, and the effects of it as so dreadful, as to make all the animate and inanimate creation tremble, and even the whole frame of nature to be convulsed with terror\*.

1 **AND** the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 2 Son of man, set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him, 3 And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I [am] against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal: 4 And I will turn thee back, and put hooks into thy jaws, *as a fisherman hooks a fish*, and I will bring thee forth, and all thine army, horses, and horsemen, all of them clothed with all sorts [of armour, even] a great company [with] bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords: 5 Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya with them; all of them with shield and helmet: 6 Gomer, and all his bands; the house of Togarmah of the north quarters, and all his bands: [and] many people with thee. 7 Be thou prepared, and prepare for thyself, thou, and all thy company that are assembled unto thee, and be thou a guard unto them; *I know thou wilt make the best preparation thou canst, which yet I despise and deride thee for.*



8 After many days thou shalt be visited, *that is, punished*: in the latter years, *toward the end of the world, after the thousand years are expired*, (Rev. xx. 8.), thou shalt come into the land [that is] brought back from the sword, *that is, delivered from their long dispersion*, [and is] gathered out of many people, against, or rather, unto the mountains of Israel, which have been always waste; or long desolate, since the time of the Romans: but it is brought forth out of the nations, and they shall dwell safely all of them; or rather, *they have for a time dwelt safely*. 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 unwall'd 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; *the Jews shall not fortify their towns, but shall trust to divine protection*; 12 To take a spoil, and to take a prey; to turn thine 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, *tyrannical princes and oppressive merchants*, shall say unto thee, Art thou come to take a spoil? hast thou gathered thy company to take a prey? to carry away silver and gold, to take away cattle and goods, to take a great spoil? *they shall come to your camp as to a market, to purchase the plunder of the Jews*.

14 Therefore, son of man, prophesy and say unto Gog, Thus saith the Lord GOD; In that day when my people of Israel dwelleth safely, shalt thou not know [it,] *and take advantage of it? yet thou shalt know to thy cost, that they dwell safely, though thou thinkest they dwell more exposed*. 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, or rather, *Art thou not he*, of whom I have spoken in old time by my servants the prophets of Israel, which prophesied in those days [many] years

that I would bring thee against them? *there are many prophecies that foretell the destruction of the future enemies of Israel; the prophets all harmonize in this, as they all spake by the same Spirit.* 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; *there shall be universal terror and confusion.* 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; *their enemies shall slay one another.* 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, *like Sodom.* *So it is said, (Rev. xx. 9.), fire from heaven devoured them.* 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; *this destruction shall contribute to the spread of the gospel.*

### REFLECTIONS.

1. GOD knows the evil thoughts which his enemies think against him and his church, *v. 10.* Even of those enemies that are yet to be born. He foresees what they will think, and how they will act, and has foredetermined what he will do with them. When ambitious, revengeful, malicious thoughts come into men's minds, God sees them; he knows all their designs afar off. This should afford encouragement to his people, *viz.*, that he knows what their enemies are contriving, and is able to defeat it; and should be a caution to us all to *hate vain thoughts, and keep our hearts with all diligence.*

2. Observe the influence of God over the human mind, and how it is expressed. He is said to bring up these enemies: not that he stirs up evil thoughts in men, but permits them to indulge and pursue them; he does not restrain them, as it is their own

act and fault to indulge them ; and the permission he gives them, is only to make their destruction, and the salvation of his people, the more remarkable.

3. The design of God in all such events is, his own glory ; that is, the display of his perfections and the advancement of his interest, see v. 23. He magnifies and sanctifies himself ; *he causes the wrath of man to praise him* ; and thus he is known among the nations ; his knowledge, fear, and service, are promoted among them. This great end is carrying on by means which to us may seem least likely to effect it ; yea, by means that seem even to oppose it. This should encourage our hearts amidst scenes of confusion and desolation ; and lead us to pray that *his name may be hallowed and magnified through all the earth.*

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## CHAPTER XXXIX.

The prophet goes on to denounce the judgments of God against the formidable enemies of his church and people. He particularly describes Israel's victory, Gog's fall and burial, and the feast of the fowls.

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, *or, strike thee with six plagues*, and will cause thee, *or, rather, after I have caused thee*, to come up from the north parts, and will bring thee, *or, have brought 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, *or confidently*, 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, *they shall know more of my power, goodness, and faithfulness, than they ever did before*, and I

will not [let them] pollute my holy name any more; *I will preserve them from those sins, by which they formerly polluted my name:* and the heathen shall know that I [am] the LORD, the Holy One in Israel.

8 Behold, it is come, and it is done, saith the Lord GOD; this [is] the day whereof I have spoken: *a remarkable phrase; the prophet speaks of it as come and done, though many thousand years were to elapse before it was to happen.* 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; *or make use of them for fuel for a long time, so many shall they be.* 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; *or, the passengers shall stop their noses to avoid the stench;* and there shall they bury Gog and all his multitude: and they shall call [it,] The valley of Hamon-gog, *that is, the multitude of 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 in the day that I shall be glorified, saith the Lord GOD; *it shall be an honour to them, though a mean and disagreeable business, because they were enemies of God's Israel, and they did it out of concern for the purity of the land.* 14 And they shall sever out men of continual employment, passing through the land to bury with the passengers, *with their help and assistance,* 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, they shall he set up a sign by it, till the buriers have buried it in the valley of Hamon-gog; *if they cannot stay to do it themselves, they shall leave some mark that men may not touch it and be defiled.* 16 And also the name of the city in that valley, [shall be] Hamonah, *or Multitude, in memory of this destruction.* 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, *persons of all ranks and degrees*, 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 the riders on and in them*, 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, *to the end of the world*. 23 And the heathen shall know *that I was not overpowered by other deities*, but 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, *or rather, notwithstanding I have thus punished them for their sins*, thus saith the Lord GOD; Now will I bring again the captivity of Jacob, and have mercy upon the whole house of Israel, and will be jealous for my holy name; 26 After that they have borne their shame, and all their trespasses whereby they have trespassed against me, when they dwelt safely in their land, and none made [them] afraid. 27 When I have brought them again from the people, and gathered them out of their enemies' lands, and am sanctified in them in the sight of many nations; 28 Then shall they know that I [am] the LORD their God, which caused them to be led into captivity among the heathen: but I have gathered them unto their own land, and have left none of them any more there, *that is, in captivity, all shall return*. 29 Neither will I hide my face any more from them: for I have

\* It is with peculiar art and propriety that the prophet delays the summoning of all the birds and beasts of prey in nature, to feast on the slain, (in allusion to the custom of feasting on the remainder of the sacrifices) till after the greater multitudes are buried; to intimate that even the remainder, and, as it were, the stragglers from such mighty hosts, would be more than enough to satisfy their utmost rapacity.—Dr. SMITH.

poured out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord God; *they shall never apostatize any more, but my Spirit shall be plentifully communicated, and I will preserve them from falling. This is a plain proof that it cannot refer to their return from Babylon, or to any other circumstance that hath yet happened to the Jewish people.*

### REFLECTIONS.

1. WE are led to infer from hence, that those who rightly know God's name, will not pollute it, *v. 7.* It is ignorance of God's name that leads men to swear and curse by it; to blaspheme it, and speak irreverently of it. They are either ignorant of him, or forget who and what he is, or they would never so much as take his name in vain. It should be our desire to know his name, his attributes and perfections, by studying his works and word; that we may maintain an holy awe of him, and neither by our tongues or actions dishonour his name, or give occasion to others to speak evil of it.

2. From this prophecy of cleansing the land, we may learn how unanimous and active we ought to be in reforming our country. Sin is much more polluting than dead carcasses and bones; it is a moral pollution; its highest reproach, and threatens its ruin. All therefore who fear God and love their country, should join, heartily to cleanse the land. This will be to our renown, when, in consequence of our pious, zealous attempts, God shall be glorified. It will be our honour to rise up for him against the workers of iniquity. Let us also pray that God would *purge away the filth of our land, that we may be an holy people to the Lord.*

3. The best evidence of God's favour, the surest proof that he is reconciled to any person, is his pouring out his Spirit to promote this purity and zeal, *v. 29.* This is the only safe ground of assurance, or even good hope: and it is the greatest blessing; for it relates to the soul and eternity; and will be the source of substantial pleasure and happiness. This therefore we should earnestly desire, and never quench or grieve the Spirit of God, that we may *walk continually in the light of his countenance.*

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## CHAPTER XL\*.

Contains Ezekiel's vision of the model of a city, and of an angel with a line and measuring reed taking the dimensions of the temple.

1 **I**N the five and twentieth year of our captivity, in the beginning of the year, in the tenth [day] of the month, in the fourteenth year after that the city was smitten, in the self same day the hand of the LORD was upon me, and brought me hither. 2 In the visions of God brought he me into the land of Israel, and set me upon a very high mountain, by which [was] as the frame of a city on the south. 3 And he brought me thither, and, behold, [there was] a man, whose appearance [was] like the appearance of brass, with a line of flax in his hand, and a measuring reed; and he stood in the gate. 4 And the man said unto me, Son of man, behold with thine eyes, and hear with thine ears, and set thine heart upon all that I shall show thee; for to the intent that I might show [them] unto thee [art] thou brought hither: declare all that thou seest to the house of Israel. 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 an hand breadth: so he measured the breadth of the building, one reed; and the height, one reed.

6 Then came he unto the gate which looketh toward the east, and went up the stairs thereof, and measured the threshold of the gate, [which was] one reed broad; and the other threshold of the [gate, which was] one reed broad. 7 And [every] little chamber [was] one reed long, and one reed broad; and between the little chambers [were] five cubits; and the threshold of the gate by the porch of the gate within [was] one reed. 8 He measured also the porch of the gate within, one reed. 9 Then measured he the porch of the gate, eight cubits; and the posts thereof, two cubits; and the porch of the gate [was] inward. 10 And the little chambers of the gate eastward [were] three on this side, and three on that side; they three [were] of one measure: and the posts had one measure on this side and on that side. 11 And he measured the breadth of the entry of the gate, ten cubits; [and] the length of

\* See the introduction to chap. xlvii.

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 threecore cubits, even unto the posts 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 forefront of the lower gate unto the forefront of the inner court without, an hundred cubits eastward and northward.

20 And the gate to 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 an 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.

27 And [there was] a gate in the inner court toward the south:



and he measured from gate to gate toward the south an 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 utter 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 : [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, 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 utter 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.

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, where upon they slew [their sacrifices.] 42 And the four tables [were] of hewn stone for the burnt offering, of a cubit and an half long, and a cubit and an half broad, and one cubit high : whereupon also they laid the instruments wherewith they slew the burnt offering and the sacrifice. 43 And within [were] hooks an 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, an hundred cubits long, and an hundred cubits broad, foursquare ; 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.

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## CHAPTER XLI.

The measurement of the parts, chambers, and ornaments of the temple described in the preceding chapter.

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. 7 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. 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 an hundred cubits long ; and the separate place, and the building, with the walls thereof, an hundred cubits long ; 14 Also the breadth of the face of the house, and of the separate place toward the east, an 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, an 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.

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## CHAPTER XLII.

The chambers for the priests, and the use thereof described, with the measurement of the outward court.

1 **T**HEN he brought me forth into the utter 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 an 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 utter 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 not 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 utter court on the forepart of the chambers, the length thereof [was]

fifty cubits. 8 For the length of the chambers that [were] in the utter court [was] fifty cubits : and, lo, before the temple [were] an hundred cubits. 9 And from under these chambers [was] the entry on the east side, as one goeth into them from the utter 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 utter 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.

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.

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## CHAPTER XLIII.

The glory of God enters the temple ; where he promises to dwell if the people will put away their idolatry ; to induce them to this, the prophet is here directed to show them the plan and law of this new temple.

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.

7 And he said unto me, Son of man, the place of my throne, and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel for ever, and my holy name, shall the house of Israel no more defile, [neither] they, nor their kings, by their whoredom, nor by the carcases of their kings in their high places. 8 In their setting of their threshold by my thresholds, and their posts 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, show 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, show them the form of the house, and the fashion thereof, and the goings out thereof, and the comings in thereof, and all the forms thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and all the forms thereof, and all the laws thereof : and write [it] in their sight,

that they may keep the whole form thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and do them. 12 This [is] the law of the house; Upon the top of the mountain the whole limit thereof round about [shall be] most holy. Behold, this is the law of the house.

13 And these [are] the measures of the altar after the cubits; The cubit [is] a cubit and an hand breadth; even the bottom [shall be] a cubit and the breadth a cubit, and the border thereof by the edge thereof round about [shall be] a span; and this [shall be] the higher place of the altar. 14 And from the bottom [upon] the ground, [even] to the lower settle [shall be] two cubits, and the breadth one cubit; and from the lesser settle [even] to the greater settle [shall be] four cubits, and the breadth [one] cubit. 15 So the altar [shall be] four cubits; and from the altar and upward [shall be] four horns. 16 And the altar [shall be] twelve [cubits] long, twelve broad, square in the four squares thereof. 17 And the settle [shall be] fourteen [cubits] long, and fourteen broad in the four squares thereof; and the border about it [shall be] half a cubit; and the bottom thereof [shall be] a cubit about; and his stairs shall look toward the east.

18 And he said unto me, Son of man, thus saith the LORD GOD; These [are] the ordinances of the altar in the day when they shall make it, to offer burnt offerings thereon, and to sprinkle blood thereon. 19 And thou shalt give to the priests 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.

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## CHAPTER XLIV.

In which the people are reproved for suffering strangers to pollute the sanctuary; idolaters are declared incapable of the priest's office, and the sons of Zadok are accepted to it; also the ordinances for the priests.

1 **T**HEN he brought me back the way of the gate of the outward sanctuary which looketh toward the east; and it [was] shut. 2 Then said the LORD unto me; This gate shall be shut, it shall not be opened, and no man shall enter in by it; because the LORD, the God of Israel, hath entered in by it, therefore it shall be shut. 3 [It is] for the prince; the prince, he shall sit in it to eat bread before the LORD; he shall enter by the way of the porch of [that] gate, and shall go out by the way of the same.

4 Then brought he me the way of the north gate before the house; and I looked, and, behold, the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD; and I fell upon my face. 5 And the LORD said unto me, Son of man, mark well, and behold with thine eyes, and hear with thine ears all that I say unto thee concerning all the ordinances of the house of the LORD, and all the laws thereof; and mark well the entering in of the house, with every going forth of the sanctuary. 6 And thou shalt say to the rebellious, [even] to the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God; O ye house of Israel, let it suffice you of all your abominations, 7 In that ye have brought [into my sanctuary] strangers, uncircumcised in heart, and uncircumcised in flesh, to be in my sanctuary, to pollute it, [even] my house, when ye offer my bread, the fat and the blood, and they have broken my covenant because of all your abominations. 8 And ye have not kept the charge of mine holy things: but ye have set keepers of my charge in my sanctuary for yourselves.

9 Thus saith the Lord God; No stranger uncircumcised in



heart, nor uncircumcised in flesh, shall enter into my sanctuary, of any stranger that [is] among the children of Israel. 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 mine 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.

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, whiles 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 utter court, [even] into the utter 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 them to discern between the unclean

and the clean. 24 And in controversy they shall stand in judgment; [and] they shall judge it according to my judgments: and they shall keep my laws and my statutes in all mine assemblies; and they shall hallow my sabbaths. 25 And they shall come at no dead person to defile themselves: but for father, or for mother, or for son, or for daughter, for brother, or for sister that hath had no husband, they may defile themselves. 26 And after he is cleansed, they shall reckon unto him seven days. 27 And in the day that he goeth into the sanctuary, unto the inner court, to minister in the sanctuary, he shall offer his sin offering, saith the Lord GOD. 28 And it shall be unto them for an inheritance: I [am] their inheritance: and ye shall give them no possession in Israel; I [am] their possession. 29 They shall eat the meat offering, and the sin offering, and the trespass offering; and every dedicated thing in Israel shall be theirs. 30 And the first of all the first fruits of all [things,] and every oblation, of all, of every [sort] of your oblations, shall be the priest's: ye shall also give unto the priest the first of your dough, that he may cause the blessing to rest in thine house. The priest shall not eat of any thing that is dead of itself, or torn, whether it be fowl or beast.

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## CHAPTER XLV.

In this chapter we have an account of the quantity of land for the sanctuary, the city, and the prince; and the ordinances for the prince.

1 **MOREOVER**, when ye shall divide by lot the land for inheritance, ye shall offer an oblation unto the LORD, an holy portion of the land: the length [shall be] the length of five and twenty thousand [reeds,] and the breadth [shall be] ten thousand. This [shall be] holy in all the borders thereof round about. 2 Of this there shall be for the sanctuary five hundred [in length,] with five hundred [in breadth,] square round about; and fifty cubits round about for the suburbs thereof. 3 And of this measure shalt thou measure the length of five and twenty thousand, and the breadth of ten thousand: and in it shall be the sanctuary [and] the most holy [place.] 4 The holy [portion] of the land shall be for the priests the ministers of the sanctuary,

which shall come near to minister unto the LORD; and it shall be a place for their houses, and an 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.

9 Thus saith the Lord GOD; Let it suffice you, O princes of Israel: remove violence and spoil, and execute judgment and justice, take away your exactions from my people, saith the Lord GOD. 10 Ye shall have just balances, and a just ephah, and a just bath. 11 The ephah and the bath shall be of one measure, that the bath may contain the tenth part of an homer, and the ephah the tenth part of an 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. 13 This [is] the oblation that ye shall offer; the sixth part of an ephah of an homer of wheat, and ye shall give the sixth part of an ephah of an homer of barley: 14 Concerning the ordinance of oil, the bath of oil, [ye shall offer] the tenth part of a bath out of the cor, [which is] an homer of ten baths; for ten baths [are] an homer: 15 And one lamb out of the flock, out of two hundred, out of the fat pastures of Israel; for a meat offering, and for a burnt offering, and for peace offerings, to make reconciliation for them, saith the Lord GOD. 16 All the people of the land shall [give] this oblation for the prince in Israel. 17 And it shall be the prince's part [to give] burnt offerings and meat offerings and drink offerings, in the feasts, and in the new moons, and in the sabbaths, in all solemnities of the house of Israel: he shall prepare the sin offering, and the meat offering, and the burnt offering, and the peace offerings, to make

reconciliation for the house of Israel. 18 Thus saith the Lord GOD; In the first [month,] in the first [day] of the month, thou shalt take a young bullock without blemish, and cleanse the sanctuary: 19 And the priest shall take of the blood of the sin offering, and put [it] upon the posts of the house, and upon the four corners of the settle of the altar, and upon the posts of the gate of the inner court. 20 And so thou shalt do the seventh [day] of the month for every one that erreth, and for [him that is] simple: so shall ye reconcile the house. 21 In the first [month,] in the fourteenth day of the month, ye shall have the passover, a feast of seven days; unleavened bread shall be eaten. 22 And upon that day shall the prince prepare for himself and for all the people of the land a bullock [for] a sin offering. 23 And seven days of the feast he shall prepare a burnt offering to the LORD, seven bullocks and seven rams without blemish daily the seven days; and a kid of the goats daily [for] a sin offering. 24 And ye shall prepare a meat offering of an ephah for a bullock, and an ephah for a ram, and an hin of oil for an ephah. 25 In the seventh [month,] in the fifteenth day of the month, shall ye do the like in the feast of the seven days, according to the sin offering, according to the burnt offering, and according to the meat offering, and according to the oil.

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## CHAPTER XLVI.

This chapter contains the ordinances for the prince and people in their worship; an order concerning the inheritance of the prince; and the measurement of the places for boiling and baking the offerings.

1 **T**HUS 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, and the priests 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 an 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 an 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 an hin of oil to an ephah. 12 Now when the prince shall prepare a voluntary burnt offering or peace offerings voluntarily unto the LORD, [one] shall then open him the gate that looketh toward the east, and he shall prepare his burnt offering and his peace offerings, as he did on the sabbath day: then he shall go forth; and after his going forth [one] shall shut the gate. 13 Thou shalt daily prepare a burnt offering unto the LORD [of] a lamb of the first year without blemish: thou shalt prepare it every morning. 14 And thou shalt prepare a meat offering for it every morning, the sixth part of an ephah, and the third part of an 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 offering, and the oil every morning [for] a continual burnt offering.

16 Thus saith the Lord GOD; If the prince give a gift unto any of his sons, the inheritance thereof shall be his sons', it [shall be] their possession by inheritance. 17 But if he give a gift of his inheritance to one of his servants, then it shall be his to the year of liberty; after it shall return to the prince: but his inhe-

ritance 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.

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 utter court, to sanctify the people. 21 Then he brought me forth into the utter 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 row [of 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.

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## CHAPTER XLVII.

In which we have Ezekiel's vision of the holy waters, and the virtues of them; a description of the borders of the land, and the division of it by lot\*.

**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 fore front of the house [stood

\* In the introduction to this chapter Mr. Orton hath written as follows: 'I pass over the foregoing six chapters, because I do not understand them. They contain a description of a splendid temple, the apartments, offices, and services thereof. Some have supposed it was designed to direct the Jews after their return from Babylon how to rebuild their temple. Others think that it refers to a temple that shall be built after the restoration in the latter days; but that is very unlikely, as there is all along a reference to the Levitical sacrifices. I think it must all be figurative; because, according to the best critics, this temple, described by Ezekiel was to be larger than the whole city of Jerusalem, and the city he describes larger than the whole land of Canaan. I consider it as a figurative repre-

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 utter 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, *that is, the angel*, went forth eastward, he measured a thousand cubits, and he brought me through the waters; the waters [were] to the ankles. 4 Again he measured a thousand, and brought me through the waters; the waters [were] to the knees. Again he measured a thousand, and brought me through; the waters [were] to the loins. 5 Afterward he measured a thousand; [and it was] a river that I could not pass over: for the waters were risen, waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over: *a description of the gradual propagation of christianity; like a small stream growing wider and deeper in its progress, the inconsiderable appearance it first made, and the great height to which it was afterwards raised; and it may particularly refer to the effect which the conversion and establishment of the Jews in their own land, and the conquest of their enemies, will have in spreading the gospel, and bringing in the fullness of the Gentiles, that is, the remaining heathens who are to complete the church of God.*

6 And he said unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen, *or considered*, [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, *or plain*, and go into the sea; *the waters shall run from the Jewish temple to the dead sea, that is, the salt sea, or the sea of Sodom, whose waters were putrid and poisonous, so that no fish could live there, though Jordan runs into it:* [which being] brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed; *its noxious qualities shall be taken away; so the gospel shall extend to cases the most hopeless and desperate.* 9 And it shall come to pass, [that] every thing that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live: and there shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall come thither: for they shall be healed; and

sentation of the glory of the church after their conversion, and the regular and devout worship they shall pay there upon the christian plan, described in terms taken from their ancient worship, which is very common in prophetic language. The passage before us in this forty-seventh chapter is certainly figurative, and therefore we have reason to conclude that the rest is so.'

every thing shall live whither the river cometh ; *men shall be made spiritually alive, and those that are so, shall have that life increased and strengthened.* 10 And it shall come to pass, [that] the fishers shall stand upon it from En-gedi even unto En-eglaim, *where ignorance and sin most abounded ; they shall be a [place] to spread forth nets ; their fish shall be according to their kinds, as the fish of the great sea, exceeding many.* 11 But the miry places thereof and the marshes thereof shall not be healed ; they shall be given to salt ; *to perpetual barrenness, and desolation ; those that will not be healed, shall not ; obstinate and impenitent sinners shall be given up to their own lusts.* 12 And by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed : it shall bring forth new fruit according to his months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary : and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine ; *an allusion to the spiritual health and strength which shall be received from the word and ordinances of the gospel : their state shall become like paradise ; heaven is described by the same figure, Rev. xxii. 1, 2\*.*

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 mine hand to give it unto your fathers : and this land shall fall unto you for inheritance. 15 And this [shall be] the border of the land toward the north side, from the great sea, the way of Hethlon, as men go to Zedad ; 16 Hamath, Berothah, Sibram, which [is] between the border of Damascus and the border 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. 18 And [this is] the north side. 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*

\* The remainder of this chapter is a description of the several boundaries of the holy land, indiscriminately shared between Israelites and proselytes ; to signify, that in future times the Gentiles were to be admitted to equal privileges with the Jews.



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.

### REFLECTIONS.

1. LET us praise God for these gospel blessings; those healing waters which flowed from Jerusalem, and have spread over so great a part of the earth,—and reached even to Britain. They have made a surprising change in the moral state, the sentiments, tempers, and practices of thousands. They furnish the best food and medicine of the soul. Under these figures the inestimable blessings of the gospel are set forth; and it becomes us to receive them with the greatest thankfulness.

2. We may observe the different effects which the gospel has on different persons. To those who are thoughtful, serious, and penitent, it is a savour of life; it heals the most inveterate mental disorders, and makes them wise, holy, and happy. But men that are sensual, and devoted to their lusts, are like marshes by the side of a fine river, still unprofitable and noxious: instead of deriving good from it they become worse. To them the gospel is a savour of death unto death. But the fault is in themselves, and they are justly made monuments of the divine displeasure. Let us therefore be careful how we receive and improve the gospel.

3. We should long and pray for that happy time, when these glorious effects shall be more abundantly produced; when the Jews shall be restored, and the fullness of the Gentiles brought in; when disordered minds shall be healed, the desolate parts of the earth made fruitful, and universal peace and holiness abound. Such a time we are here taught to expect; and we should exercise faith in these declarations; and in that faith pray earnestly *that the knowledge of the Lord may cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea.*

## CHAPTER XLVIII.

This chapter describes the several portions of the land belonging to each tribe, together with the portion allotted to the sanctuary, city, suburbs, and prince; as also the measure and gates of the new city.

1 **N**OW these [are] the names of the tribes. From the north end to the coast of the way of Hethlon, as one goeth to Hamath, Hazar-enan, the border of Damascus northward, to the coast of Hamath; for these are his sides east [and] west; a [portion for] Dan. 2 And by the border of Dan, from the east side unto the west side, a [portion for] Asher. 3 And by the border of Asher, from the east side even unto the west side, a [portion] for Naphtali. 4 And by the border of Naphtali, from the east side unto the west side, a [portion for] Manassch. 5 And by the border of Manassch, 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 ye 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 the west side four thousand and five hundred. 17 And the suburbs of the city shall be toward the north two hundred and fifty, and toward the south two hundred and fifty, and toward the east two hundred and fifty, and toward the west two hundred and fifty. 18 And the residue in length over against the oblation of the holy [portion shall be] ten thousand eastward, and ten thousand westward: and it shall be over against the oblation of the holy [portion;] and the increase thereof shall be for food unto them that serve the city. 19 And they that serve the city shall serve it out of all the tribes of Israel. 20 All the oblation [shall be] five and twenty thousand, by five and twenty thousand: ye shall offer the holy oblation foursquare, 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.

30 And these [are] the goings out of the city on the north side, four thousand and five hundred measures. 31 And the gates of the city [shall be] after the names of the tribes of Israel: three gates northward; one gate of Reuben, one gate of Judah, one gate of Levi. 32 And at the east side four thousand and five hundred: and three gates; and one gate of Joseph, one gate of Benjamin, one gate of Dan. 33 And at the south side four thousand and five hundred measures: and three gates; one gate of Simeon, one gate of Issachar, one gate of Zebulun. 34 At the west side four thousand and five hundred, [with] their three gates; one gate of Gad, one gate of Asher, one gate of Naph-tali. 35 [It was] round about eighteen thousand [measures:] and the name of the city from [that] day [shall be,] The Lord [is] there.

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THE BOOK OF  
THE PROPHET DANIEL.

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INTRODUCTION.

DANIEL was of the seed royal of the kings of Judah, and every way eminent as a learned man, a statesman, a saint, and a prophet. The Jews indeed will not allow him to be a prophet; and, in their bible, his book is not put among the prophets, because he did not live a mortified life, and prophesied in a strange land; but Christ calls him ‘a prophet,’ and the angel Gabriel, ‘a man greatly beloved.’ The true reason of their denying him to be a prophet was, because he so clearly foretold the sufferings of the Messiah, and the time when they should happen. Part of this book, which particularly relates to the affairs of the Babylonians, (from chap. ii. 4, to the end of chap. vii.,) is written in their own language, the Chaldaic, and all the rest in Hebrew. He lived in great favour with the Babylonian monarchs; and his extraordinary merit procured him the like regard from Darius and Cyrus, the two first kings of Persia: he was indeed the only prophet who enjoyed any great share of worldly prosperity. He lived throughout the captivity, but does not seem to have ever returned to his own country. The last of his visions, which we have an account of, was in the third year of Cyrus, (about five hundred and thirty-four years before Christ,) when he was about ninety-four years of age; and it is not likely that he lived much longer; he was then at Susa on the river Tigris, where he probably remained till he died.

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CHAPTER I.

AN account of Jehoiakim’s captivity; of Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, refusing the king’s portion, prospering with pulse and water.

1 **I**N the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it. 2 And the **L**ORD gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into

his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God: which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god *Bel*; and he brought the vessels into the treasure-house of his god, *to acknowledge him as the author of his success; but which the sacred historian ascribes to Jehovah\**.

3 And the king spake unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring [certain] of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes; *and so the threatening to Hezekiah was fulfilled, viz., that his seed should be taken away, and be eunuchs or officers in the palace of the king of Babylon; (see Isaiah, xxxix. 7.)* 4 Children, *that is, young men*, in whom was [no] blemish, but well favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, *who had the best accomplishments of body and mind, good geniuses, and well educated*, and such as [had] ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans; *namely, the language of the country, and astronomy, architecture, politics, and war; but there was no command to teach them religion.* 5 And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat and of the wine which he drank; *he ordered them a table among the king's household; so nourishing them three years, that at the end thereof they might stand before the king.* 6 Now among these were of the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. 7 Unto whom the prince of the eunuchs gave names: for he gave unto Daniel [the name] of Belteshazzar; and to Hananiah, of Shadrach; and to Mishael, of Meshach; and to Azariah, of Abed-nego; *their own names had some relation to the God of Israel, but the names which he gave them have a reference to the Chaldean idolatry.*

8 But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank †: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself. 9 Now God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs. 10 And the prince of the eunuchs said unto Daniel, I fear my lord the king, who hath appointed you your meat and your drink:

\* From this time the seventy years' captivity commenced; after this Jehoiakim humbled himself, became tributary, and was restored to his throne.

† It was a custom to offer some part of the beasts which they killed for food in sacrifice to their gods, and to pour out some of their wine as a libation to them. Or, they used such food, or it was dressed in such a manner, [as was forbidden by the law of Moses; on these accounts Daniel could not partake of these provisions without being defiled.

for why should he see your faces worse liking than the children which [are] of your sort, *or age?* then shall ye make [me] endanger my head to the king. *Such is the misery of an arbitrary government.* 11 Then said Daniel to Melzar, whom the prince of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishaël, and Azariah, 12 Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, *that is, a vegetable diet,* and water to drink. 13 Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the children that eat of the portion of the king's meat: and as thou seest, deal with thy servants. 14 So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days. 15 And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat. 16 Thus Melzar took away the portion of their meat, and the wine that they should drink; and gave them pulse.

17 As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams. 18 Now at the end of the days that the king had said he should bring them in, then the prince of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. 19 And the king communed with them; and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishaël, and Azariah: therefore stood they before the king; *that is, they continually attended at court.* 20 And in all matters of wisdom [and] understanding, that the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians [and] astrologers that [were] in all his realm; *that is, than the students in natural philosophy\*.* 21 And Daniel continued [even] unto the first year of king Cyrus: *he continued in honour and favour with the kings that succeeded Nebuchadnezzar to the end of the seventy years, so that he lived to be above ninety years old.*

## REFLECTIONS.

1. IT is of great service to a community to give young persons a good education: and it showed the wisdom and policy of this state to train up promising youths for public offices and stations. This was the practice of the most celebrated ancient states; and

\* Such were the wise men that came to Christ. The astrologers viewed the heavens and made observations on the stars; in these sciences no unlawful arts were used, else Daniel and his companions would not have studied them.

it is still of equal importance to the public. Some who would otherwise be useless, yea, injurious to society, may hereby be made great blessings to it. It will be wise in parents to give their children as large and liberal an education as their circumstances will admit of: and it is an excellent charity, and a real public benefit, to contribute to the support of charity schools and other seminaries, by which children and youth may be formed to knowledge, piety, and usefulness.

2. It becomes young people to imitate the amiable examples of temperance, prudence, and steady regard to religion, which we here read of. These young persons showed great piety, self-denial, and resolution: they did not think, that because they were of the blood royal, they might therefore indulge their appetites without control; but chose pulse and water, rather than be led into sin. Let young people learn from them to be sober and temperate in all things. And this instance proves that temperance and abstemiousness are favourable both to health and virtue, by keeping the faculties clear and strong, and in fitting men for great service, and great sufferings too, when called to them, as these young gentlemen were. Especially let them learn to be afraid of sin; resolutely to deny themselves any gratification, by which the soul may be polluted; and rather choose to hazard the favour of men, than defile their consciences by sinning against God.

3. We are here taught that learning and honour come from God. Though no doubt their tutors took great pains with these noble youths, and they were hard students, yet it is said, *God gave them knowledge*; and though they behaved prudently, inoffensively, and modestly, yet that *God brought them into favour and love*. Intellectual abilities, useful knowledge, and religious attainments, all come from the Father of Lights; which shows how fit it is that parents should pray for their children, that God would teach them, as well as instruct them themselves; and that those who lack wisdom, should *ask it of God*. Esteem and reputation come from him. All hearts are in his hands; and it depends on the turn he gives to men's minds, whether we shall be esteemed or despised in the world; without his favour, all the interest we can make for ourselves will be in vain. Let us then be steadily religious and prudent, *so shall we find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man*.



## CHAP. II. 1—30.

Nebuchadnezzar forgetting his dream, Daniel findeth it; and relates both the dream, and the interpretation of it.

1 **AND** in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar\*, Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams, wherewith his spirit was troubled, and his sleep brake from him; *the strangeness of the dreams left a strong impression upon him, though he had forgotten the particulars.* 2 Then the king commanded to call the magicians, and the astrologers, and the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans †, for to show the king his dreams. So they came and stood before the king. 3 And the king said unto them, I have dreamed a dream, and my spirit was troubled to know the dream. 4 Then spake the Chaldeans to the king in Syriack ‡, O king, live for ever: tell thy servants the dream, and we will show the interpretation. 5 The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, The thing is gone from me; *I have forgotten the particulars, but the impression of the dream remains:* if ye will not make known unto me the dream, with the interpretation thereof, ye shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made a dunghill, *so as to leave no remains of them or of your memory.* 6 But if ye show the dream, and the interpretation thereof, ye shall receive of me gifts and rewards and great honour: therefore show me the dream, and the interpretation thereof. 7 They answered again and said, Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will show the interpretation of it. The king answered and said, I know of certainty that ye would gain the time, because ye see the thing is gone from me; *he perceived that they wished to put him off for the present, and to trifle with him till his*

\* He is spoken of in the former chapter as reigning when Daniel was taken captive, who was instructed three years before he came in to the king; this must therefore refer to the second year of his reigning alone: having reigned some years with his father, as the heathen historians tell us; this being the manner of reckoning among the Chaldeans.

† The word *sorcercrs* is sometimes used in an ill sense for those who practised wicked arts. The *Chaldeans* was a general name for this kind of learned men; as astronomy and astrology were much studied among hem; and is used as such both by the Greek and Latin writers.

‡ The Chaldean and Syriack are different names for the same language; that language is used in this book as far as relates to the affairs of Babylon, that is, to the end of chap. vii.

*curiosity was allayed, and the traces of his dream lost ; so that they might tell him any thing, and he would not be certain whether it was his dream or not.* 9 But if ye will not make known unto me the dream, [there is but] one decree for you ; *no change to be made in my purpose*: for ye have prepared lying and corrupt words to speak before me, till the time be changed ; *till something happen to prevent the execution of my purpose*: therefore tell me the dream, and I shall know that ye can show me the interpretation thereof.

10 The Chaldeans answered before the king, and said, There is not a man upon the earth that can show the king's matter: therefore [there is] no king, lord, nor ruler, [that] asked such things at any magician, or astrologer, or Chaldean. 11 And [it, is] a rare thing that the king requireth, and there is none other that can show it before the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh ; *nene but beings superior to men ; or, as some render it, 'except that God,' supposing them to refer to the true God.* 12 For this cause the king was angry and very furious, and commanded to destroy all the wise [men] of Babylon. 13 And the decree went forth that the wise [men] should be slain ; and they sought Daniel and his fellows to be slain\*.

14 Then Daniel answered with counsel and wisdom to Arioch the captain of the king's guard, which was gone forth to slay the wise [men] of Babylon ; *not with rage against the king's bloody edict, but calmly and prudently*: 15 He answered and said to Arioch the king's captain, Why [is] the decree [so] hasty from the king? *or, What is the occasion of this sudden decree?* Then Arioch made the thing known to Daniel. 16 Then Daniel went in, and desired of the king that he would give him time, and that he would show the king the interpretation ; *and his passion being somewhat abated, he recollected Daniel's wisdom, and being desirous to know his dream, he was willing to grant him the time he asked.* 17 Then Daniel went to his house, and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions: 18 That they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret ; that Daniel and his fellows should not perish with the rest of the wise [men] of Babylon ; *they were equally concerned, and therefore agreed to join in prayer on this occasion.* 19 Then was the secret

\* It is strange that he did not first apply to them, as he had before found them ten times wiser than his magicians and astrologers ; but perhaps he thought them too young to be consulted on this great occasion, or was prejudiced against their nation and religion ; or Providence might so order it, to make Daniel's discovery of the dream more remarkable.

revealed unto Daniel in a night vision; *by a particular and well-known impression upon his mind, which assured him that he was right.* Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven. 20 Daniel answered *the inspiring Deity*, and said, Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his, *in ordering and bringing to pass all events:* 21 And he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding; *alluding to the great changes in the kingdoms of the earth, referred to in the dream:* 22 He revealeth the deep and secret things: he knoweth what [is] in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him; *the certain knowledge of whatever shall happen, however unexpected or remote.* 23 I thank thee, and praise thee, O thou God of my fathers, who hast given me wisdom and might, and hast made known unto me now what we desired of thee: for thou hast [now] made known unto us the king's matter\*.

24 Therefore Daniel went in unto Arioch, whom the king had ordained to destroy the wise [men] of Babylon: he went and said thus unto him; Destroy not the wise [men] of Babylon; *some of them may be worthy men, laudably employed in the pursuit of knowledge, and there is no reason for destroying any of them on this account:* bring me in before the king, and I will show unto the king the interpretation. 25 Then Arioch brought in Daniel before the king in haste, and said thus unto him, I have found a man of the captives of Judah, that will make known unto the king the interpretation; *Arioch, like a true courtier, was desirous to make a merit of the discovery, though he had sought him out to destroy him.* 26 The king answered and said to Daniel, whose name [was] Belteshazzar, Art thou able to make known unto me the dream which I have seen, and the interpretation thereof? 27 Daniel answered in the presence of the king, and said, The secret which the king hath demanded cannot the wise [men,] the astrologers, the magicians, the soothsayers, *those who foretell future events by looking into the entrails of animals which are slain for sacrifice,* show unto the king; 28 But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days, *that is, in future ages, especially the kingdom of the Messiah.* Thy dream, and the visions of thy head upon thy bed, are these; 29 As for thee, O king,

\* As his companions had joined with him in prayer, he humbly mentions their prayers with his own, though the secret was only revealed to him.

thy thoughts came [into thy mind] upon thy bed, what should come to pass hereafter, *whether thy monarchy should continue in thy family or not*: and he that revealeth secrets maketh known to thee what shall come to pass. 30 But as for me, this secret is not revealed to me for [any] wisdom that I have more than any living, but for [their] sakes that shall make known the interpretation to the king, and that thou mightest know the thoughts of thy heart; *that is, for the sake of the Jews, that thou mayest be more favourable to them: or it should rather be rendered, 'For this reason, that the interpretation might be made known to the king.'*

## REFLECTIONS.

1. WHAT a wretched creature is the man who is under the power of wild and fiery passions! What a contemptible figure does this great king make in demanding what was impossible to be obtained; charging his astrologers with a combination to affront him, and commanding them to be put to death, notwithstanding they had so much reason on their side? Hot-headed and furious men are generally deaf to reason; and he who attempts to convince them by it, will only exasperate their passions. This should teach us to rule our spirits, and make us thankful that we do not live under an arbitrary government, but that we have our lives and liberties under the protection of good laws and courts of justice.

2. Let us learn in difficult cases to make known our requests unto God, as Daniel and his companions did. We have no reason to expect such miraculous discoveries of our favour; but God can by his providence show us the way of duty when we are most perplexed, and defend us from the danger which threatens us. He can reveal to us secrets when it will be useful for us to know them. Daniel's success in this respect should be an encouragement to our supplications; and his praises to God, when his prayer was answered, should teach us, when distressed and delivered, to offer to God thanksgiving.

3. The consideration of the inability of the creature should lead us to God. The wise men could not show the dream nor the interpretation, but God could. There are many things beyond human skill and power, and in many other cases *vain is the help of man*. This should prevent our being too fond of, or expecting too much from, any man. But there is a God in heaven who knows

all things and can do all things. *Wisdom and might are his*; and he will employ them for the good of his servants; and blessed be his name for ever and ever.

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CHAP. II. 31, to the end.

The dream and the interpretation.

31 **THOU**, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness [was] excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof [was] terrible\*. 32 This image's head [was] of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass. 33 His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. 34 Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, *that is, cut out of a quarry, and thrown by an invisible power*, which smote the image upon his feet [that were] of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. 35 Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them; and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth. 36 This [is] the dream; and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king; *modestly giving his companions part of the praise, by whose concurrent prayers he obtained the discovery*. 37 Thou, O king, [art] a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. 38 And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou [art] this head of gold †. 39 And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee ‡, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule

\* As Nebuchadnezzar's imagination was full of sublime ideas of grandeur and dominion, a human image of great lustre is represented before him; whereas in Daniel's vision the same empires were represented by a wild, voracious beast, as the great enemies of truth and righteousness, and the supporters of idolatry and tyranny.

† This refers to the Babylonian empire, which was now arrived at its greatest glory, extent, and grandeur; particularly to the magnificence of Babylon, which was the wonder of the world, and called by Isaiah, *The Golden City*.

‡ That of the Medes and Persians, which arose quickly in the days of his

over all the earth; *represented by the belly and thighs of the image*\*. 40 And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all [things:] and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise†. 41 And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay ‡. 42 And [as] the toes of the feet [were] part of iron, and part of clay, [so] the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken §. 43 And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay ||. 44 And in the days of these kings, *that is, in the days of some of them, and during the continuance of the Roman empire*, shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, [but] it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever ¶. 45 Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream [is]

grandson Belsazzar, and continued between two and three hundred years. This was inferior to the former, as the empire was not so extensive, and the princes worse men.

\* This refers to the Grecian kingdom, especially under Alexander the Great, who conquered the world. Homer represents the Greeks as famous for their brasen armour; and therefore it is called a Kingdom of Brass. This was divided afterwards into four kingdoms by Alexander's generals; the principal of these were Syria and Egypt, which are represented by the thighs, but are always spoken of by heathen writers as one and the same kingdom.

† This represents the Roman empire, which should rule over the earth, or all the countries that had been subject to the other empires: by the two legs, some understand the eastern and western empires; and others, the two consuls, or principal magistrates of Rome.

‡ This refers to the ten kingdoms into which the Roman empire was divided. The iron and clay may refer to the civil and ecclesiastical power after the establishment of the popes of Rome: the ecclesiastical power represented by the clay, as it not only defiled but weakened the empire.

§ Much of the Roman strength remained notwithstanding their internal divisions.

|| This refers to the attempts of these ten kingdoms to strengthen themselves by inter-marriages, towards the latter part of the Roman empire: yet their different interests engaged them in continual wars, and the ecclesiastical power weakened them all, as clay would iron.

¶ This refers to the kingdom of the Messiah, which should be set up during the last of these kingdoms, (for the stone smote the image on the feet,) and predicts, that Christ was to have no successor; that there should be no revolution in his kingdom, but that he should destroy all opposing powers. Christ did not indeed

certain, and the interpretation thereof sure; *that is, this kingdom shall not take its rise from secular power, but be a spiritual kingdom, raised by the interposition of divine Providence; and which, though small and obscure at first, shall afterwards spread itself, and fill the earth (according to ver. 35. ;) and as sure as thou hast seen this, there shall be an exact correspondence between the dream and the event.*

46 Then the king Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face, and worshipped Daniel \*, and commanded that they should offer an oblation and sweet odours unto him. 47 The king answered unto Daniel, and said, Of a truth [it is,] that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldst reveal this secret. 48 Then the king made Daniel a great man, and gave him many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise [men] of Babylon. 49 Then Daniel requested of the king, and he set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, over the affairs of the province of Babylon: but Daniel [sat] in the gate of the king; *he prevailed for them to share in his office and honours, but he himself was kept near the king, and consulted in all affairs of state.*

### REFLECTION.

WE should be led to admire the spirit of prophecy, which foretold these wonderful changes which have been so exactly fulfilled; and especially to rejoice and be thankful that God hath set up the kingdom of Christ, here foretold, and that it hath hitherto prevailed and endured. It hath outlived most other kingdoms, and shall endure for ever. It is a kingdom set up by the God of heaven; not promoted and supported by human wisdom and strength, but by the power of Jehovah. And what God hath done to support it hitherto, should encourage our faith that it shall still be maintained. While we enjoy the blessings of it, let us be careful to observe its laws, to promote its interest and advancement, and in every respect *to walk worthy of God, who hath called us to his kingdom and glory.*

destroy the former kingdoms, but he destroyed that in which they were included, their heathen principles; and will at last destroy all powers that are opposite to his interest, and will not submit to his authority.

\* Prostration was an expression of the highest veneration; this Nebuchadnezzar therefore used to Daniel, thinking him more than human: this adoration no doubt Daniel opposed, and referred the glory of all to God; that he made some address to the king is supposed in the next verse.

## CHAPTER III.

Nebuchadnezzar sets up a golden image in Dura, and decrees that all his subjects shall worship it; Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego are accused of a refusal to this decree; for which they are cast into the fiery furnace, and delivered: a striking example of the interposition of Providence in favour of true and inflexible piety; the apostle refers to this when he speaks of some who by faith quenched the violence of fire.

1 **NEBUCHADNEZZAR**, the king, made an image of gold, whose height [was] threescore cubits, [and] the breadth thereof six cubits: he set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon\*. 2 Then Nebuchadnezzar, the king, sent to gather together the princes, the governors and the captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which Nebuchadnezzar, the king, had set up. 3 Then the princes, the governors, and captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, were gathered together unto the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar, the king, had set up, *ready to perform the worship that he required.* 4 Then an herald, *to denote the extent of the Babylonish empire,* cried aloud, To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages, 5 [That] at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music †, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar, the king, hath set up: 6 And whoso falleth not down and worshippeth shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace ‡. 7 Therefore, at that time, when all the people

\* This was the image of Bel, his god, (in honour of whom Daniel was called Belteshazzar :) probably the height of the pedestal was included, or else it would have been disproportionate: as there were many worshippers, it was placed on high, that all might see it. Diodorus Siculus mentions an image found in the temple of Belus forty feet high, which some think was the same.

† The names of these instruments in Chaldaic are like the Greek; which some have urged as an argument that this book was not written till after the Greeks had conquered the east: but these names in the Greek might be derived from the Chaldaic; the instrument might be brought from Tyre, and to Tyre by the Greeks; Nebuchadnezzar having conquered that city, where, no doubt, instruments of music were in great perfection.

‡ Burning alive was a punishment common among the Chaldeans. This is the first time we read in Scripture of dividing time by hours.



heard the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and all kinds of music, all the people, the nations, and the languages, fell down [and] worshipped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar, the king, had set up; *the people readily complied; it being a common maxim among the heathen, that they must accommodate themselves to the worship of every country where they resided.*

8 Wherefore at that time certain Chaldeans, *who were grieved that these foreigners should be promoted,* came near, and accused the Jews. 9 They spake and said to the king Nebuchadnezzar, O king, live for ever. 10 Thou, O king, hast made a decree, that every man that shall hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music, shall fall down and worship the golden image: 11 And whoso falleth not down and worshippeth, [that] he should be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. 12 There are certain Jews whom thou hast set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego; *who have been raised by thy favour, and are under the highest obligations to thee;* these men, O king, have not regarded thee; they serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.

13 Then Nebuchadnezzar in [his] rage and fury commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. Then they brought these men before the king. 14 Nebuchadnezzar spake and said unto them, [Is it] true, or, *Is it on purpose to affront me,* O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up? 15 Now if ye be ready that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made; [well:] but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who [is] that God that shall deliver you out of my hands? *forgetting the God he had before acknowledged, and impiously putting himself on a level with the Almighty.* 16 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, answered, and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we [are] not careful to answer thee in this matter; *the case is so plain, that it admits of no dispute or deliberation.* 17 If it be [so,] our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king\*. 18 But

\* How far they had any immediate revelation to assure them of deliverance, we cannot say; they might, under a powerful impression on their minds, utter the words, without understanding the full meaning of them themselves.

if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up, *and will abide by the consequences* \*.

19 Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego: [therefore] he spake, and commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated *for other malefactors. He was highly provoked by their ingratitude and obstinacy, as he would call it, in so little a thing.* 20 And he commanded the most mighty men that [were] in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, [and] to cast [them] into the burning fiery furnace. 21 Then these men were bound in their coats, their hosen, and their hats, *in their mantles, trowsers, and turbans,* and their [other] garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. 22 Therefore because the king's commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flame of the fire slew, *or suffocated,* those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego †. 23 And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.

24 Then Nebuchadnezzar, the king, was astonished *at the destruction of the guards, and the preservation of these three men,* and rose up in haste, [and] spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king. 25 He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the son of God, *or, an angel* ‡. 26 Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, [and] spake, and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, ye servants of the most high God, come forth, and come [hither:] *he now remembered the God whom he had before acknowledged.* Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, came forth of the midst of the fire, *which had burned nothing but the cords with which they were bound.* 27 And

\* It is natural to inquire, Where was Daniel? No doubt he did not join in the idolatry; perhaps he was at a distance, or his enemies thought him too much in favour to make the first attempt upon him; or perhaps he had some inspired directions not to interpose for his friends, as the supremacy and power of Jehovah would be illustrated, and idolatry confounded, by their deliverance.

† There was something extraordinary in this; perhaps the fire was driven out as with a violent blast of wind on the descent of the angel.

‡ There is an account of their prayers and praises, or some sublime strains of devotion, which they made use of on this occasion, in the Apocrypha: but as this is a much later composition, it is not greatly to be depended upon.

the princes, governors and captains, and the king's counsellors, being gathered together, saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them. [Then] Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed [be] the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, *that is, refused obedience to his decree, and rendered it of no effect*, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God. 29 Therefore I make a decree, That every people, nation, and language, which speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill: because there is no other god that can deliver after this sort.

30 Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, in the province of Babylon; *he restored them to their posts. This was a happy deliverance for the rest of the Jews; for had these men been consumed, it is probable that all the rest of the Jews would have been persecuted, and must either have turned idolaters, or have been destroyed.*

### REFLECTIONS.

1. WE here see how soon impressions of religion may be lost. It is uncertain how long this event happened after the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream; but it is a proof that he had forgotten the God of the Jews, the God of gods, whom he then acknowledged: he therefore set up a new idol, and commanded the people to worship it. After this he confessed Jehovah to be the most high God; superior to all other gods; yet he neither broke his image, nor abolished the worship of it. Thus, many have awakenings of conscience, are convinced of the evil of sin, see their own practices to be wrong and dangerous; and yet continue in them. How careful then should we be to cherish serious impressions, till they issue in a sound and thorough conversion.

2. See how idolatry and false worship have been supported in the world: by the splendour of images, the pomp of worship, and the charms of music, to allure the senses; and by persecution, penalties, and death, to terrify the mind; and all with the same design, to confound the understanding, and silence the voice of

reason. By these methods popish idolatry is still supported; but true religion and christian worship need none of these aids.

3. Here is a noble instance of heroic fortitude and resolution, which deserves to be considered and imitated by all, especially young persons. Much might have been said for the compliance of these young men: it was but for once, on a great occasion; all the grandees complied; as Nebuchadnezzar had conferred great honour and dignity upon them, it was ungrateful to refuse; by compliance, they might have kept their posts, and served their countrymen, and the cause of God. But the express law of God forbade it. They reproached not the king, nor bantered his image and worship; but answered with all calmness and steadiness, *We will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.* In so plain a case there was no need to deliberate; to do that, where the duty is plain, is very dangerous. They argued not about the matter, but answered peremptorily at once, *We will not,* let the consequence be what it may. Thus it becomes young people, and indeed all of us, to answer the temptations which attack us; *to quit ourselves like men, and be strong;* remembering what a God we serve, and how able he is both to deliver and reward us. To attain this fortitude and resolution, we must deny ourselves in lesser instances. If these confessors had not long before refused to eat of the king's meat, and been content to live on pulse, to avoid sin, they would probably have complied.

4. We may reflect on the power of God, and his care of his servants. Angels are at his command; fire is under his control; nothing can be lost by fidelity to him. Who would not fear and serve that Being who has thus promised, and in this instance literally performed it, *Isa. xliii. 2., When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.*

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## CHAPTER IV.

This chapter contains a wonderful story; it was written by Nebuchadnezzar, and in the form of a royal proclamation was sent abroad, and directed to all men.

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

4 I Nebuchadnezzar was at rest in mine house, and flourishing in my palace; *all my affairs were in a prosperous way, and I thought myself very secure:* 5 I saw a dream which made me afraid, and the thoughts upon my bed and the visions of my head troubled me. 6 Therefore made I a decree to bring in all the wise [men] of Babylon before me, that they might make known unto me the interpretation of the dream. 7 Then came in the magicians, the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers: and I told the dream before them; but they did not make known unto me the interpretation thereof.

8 But at the last Daniel, (*who probably had been employed about other business, and not consulted till they failed; or, being master of the wise men, he gave his judgment the last,*) came in before me, whose name [was] Belteshazzar, according to the name of my god, and in whom [is] the spirit of the holy gods, *or the holy God, in the singular, as the word often refers to Jehovah:* and before him I told the dream, [saying,] 9 O Belteshazzar, master of the magicians, because I know that the spirit of the holy gods [is] in thee, and no secret troubleth thee, tell me the visions of my dream that I have seen, and the interpretation thereof, *for now I know the dream.* 10 Thus [were] the visions of mine head in my bed; I saw, and behold a tree in the midst of the earth, and the height thereof [was] great\*. 11 The tree grew, and was strong, and the height thereof reached unto heaven, and the sight thereof to the

\* Kings are often represented by this simile; particularly the king of Assyria by Ezekiel, chap. xxxi. 3.

end of all the earth, so that persons might see it at a great distance : 12 The leaves thereof [were] fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it [was] meat for all : the beasts of the field had shadow under it, and the fowls of the heaven dwelt in the boughs thereof, and all flesh was fed of it ; *it was useful as well as great ; all thought themselves safe and happy under its protection.* 13 I saw in the visions of my head upon my bed, and, behold, a watcher and an holy one came down from heaven ; *one of the holy angels, who watch over the affairs of men, and execute the counsels of God :* 14 He cried aloud, and said thus, Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches, shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit : let the beasts get away from under it, and the fowls from his branches, *no longer relying on its protection.* 15 Nevertheless leave the stump of his roots in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, *to keep it from being rooted up and utterly destroyed,* in the tender grass of the field ; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion [be] with the beasts in the grass of the earth. 16 Let his heart be changed from man's, and let a beast's heart be given unto him ; and let seven times, *or years,* pass over him ; *words which must have puzzled him more than any thing else.* 17 This matter [is] by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones\* : to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men ; *which Nebuchadnezzar's pride and tyranny had rendered him.* 18 This dream I king Nebuchadnezzar have seen. Now thou, O Belteshazzar, declare the interpretation thereof, forasmuch as all the wise [men] of my kingdom are not able to make known unto me the interpretation ; *they might think it referred to his humiliation and calamity, and therefore be afraid to tell him :* but thou art able ; for the spirit of the holy gods [is] in thee.

19 Then Daniel, whose name [was] Belteshazzar, was astonished for one hour, *that is, for a considerable space,* and his thoughts troubled him ; *the circumstance was astonishing, and his high regard for the king increased his concern.* Then The king spake, and said, Belteshazzar, Let not the dream, or the interpretation thereof, trouble thee. Belteshazzar answered *with tenderness and politeness,* and said, My lord, the dream [be] to them that hate thee, and the interpretation thereof to thine enemies. 20 The tree that thou

\* God is sometimes represented as consulting with his angels, and they, as joining in his decrees ; but by *holy ones,* some understand saints upon earth praying God to restrain his tyranny.

sawest, which grew, and was strong, whose height reached unto the heaven, and the sight thereof to all the earth; 21 Whose leaves [were] fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it [was] meat for all; under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and upon whose branches the fowls of the heaven had their habitation; *repeating all this, to show what notice he had taken of the relation*; 22 It [is] thou, O king, that art grown and become strong: for thy greatness is grown, and reacheth unto heaven, and thy dominion to the end of the earth. 23 And whereas the king saw a watcher and an holy one coming down from heaven, and saying, Hew the tree down, and destroy it: yet leave the stump of the roots thereof in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass in the tender grass of the field, *implying, that a secret powerful providence should watch over Nebuchadnezzar, and guard him from wild beasts and the inclemency of the weather, till his reason returned*; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and [let] his portion [be] with the beasts of the field, till seven times pass over him; 24 This [is] the interpretation, O king, and this [is] the decree of the most High, which is come upon my lord the king: 25 That they shall drive thee from men, *or, thou shalt be driven from men, seized with lunacy and madness, and be incapable of human converse*, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee, till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. 26 And whereas they, *that is, God, and his angels who execute his pleasure*, commanded to leave the stump of the tree roots; thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee, after that thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule. 27 Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by showing mercy to the poor, *whom thou hast injured and oppressed*, if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity.

28 All this came upon the king Nebuchadnezzar\*. 29 At the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon; *God's patience waited, but Daniel's advice made but little impression*. 30 The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty? *He strutted about as though he were independent of the most High*; sur-

\* He sometimes speaks in the first person and sometimes in the third as many writers do.

reying the glory of a creation of his own, reflecting on what he had done to make the city beautiful and magnificent. And 31 While the word [was] in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, [saying,] O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee. 32 And they shall drive thee, *or, thou shalt be driven*, from men, and thy dwelling [shall be] with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will; *the terror of this voice and the remembrance of Daniel's interpretation, might hasten his madness; for* 33 The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar, and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' [feathers,] and his nails like birds' [claws:] *he ran out into a large park near the palace; and his ministers, seeing no hope of his recovery till the time fixed, and believing this to be the will of Providence, left him to wander there, and put the kingdom under a regency for seven years\**. 34 And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, *whereas before they were fixed on the earth*, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion [is] an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom [is] from generation to generation: 35 And all the inhabitants of the earth [are] reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and [among] the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou? 36 At the same time my reason returned unto me: and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honour and brightness returned unto me; *I was able to behave in as wise, rational, and majestic a manner as before*; and my counsellors and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me; *God gave such a turn to their minds, that they sought to me, and revered me as much as before*. 37 Now I Nebuchadnezzar, *(he does not say king Nebuchadnezzar,)* with all humility of soul, praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works [are] truth, and his ways judgment; *acknowledging not only his power, but his justice*: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase. *So he found it; he had walked in pride, but how was he brought low, even to creep upon the ground! This is*

\* There is a fragment of an ancient historian of those days, who gives some account of this event, quoted by Scaliger and other writers.



*the last we read of him; one would hope he lived and died under these good impressions, and that this judgment upon him might be the saving of his soul.*

## REFLECTIONS.

1. How soon may the minds of the greatest men be terrified; v. 4. Nebuchadnezzar had made many successful campaigns, obtained great glory, made his bed easy, and was well guarded; yet he was terrified. Of what little value are riches and honour, when they cannot secure the peace of the mind, nor relieve it when God is a terror to it.

2. It is our duty to inform others of God's dealings with us, as far as may be for his glory and their good. All countries no doubt heard of Nebuchadnezzar's distraction; but he lets them know that the hand of God was in it, and bears testimony to his power and righteousness. Thus should we embrace every opportunity of glorifying God, and celebrating his excellencies; and not be ashamed to mention even those dispensations which are most afflictive and mortifying to us.

3. Daniel's excellent counsel to Nebuchadnezzar, should be attended to by all those who have been unjust or uncharitable, viz., to break off their sins, to cease to do evil, and to bring forth fruits meet for repentance; to be as forward to show mercy, as they have been to oppress or bear hard upon others. This may remove temporal judgments, at least prevent or defer them; but it is absolutely necessary in order to secure everlasting tranquillity.

4. What a dreadful case is it to be deprived of reason! The most afflictive of all temporal judgments. The poorest beggar in his kingdom was more honourable and happy than this insane king. How thankful should we be for the continuance of our reason, and how careful never to injure it, by drunkenness, violent passions, anxious cares about the world, or suffering our faculties to rust. Let us tenderly pity those who want it; never censure them, or make a jest of them; but contribute all in our power for their relief.

5. Observe how easily God can humble the proudest of men. This is one of the finest, most humbling, and instructive lessons to human vanity, that ever was exhibited; and a glorious, lasting proof of God's supremacy, almighty power, and hatred of pride. Let us attend to those instructions which Nebuchadnezzar hath

given us, and remember, that the heavens rule, that the most High governs, that *he will abase those that walk in pride, and that none can ever harden himself against him, and prosper.*

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## CHAPTER V.

In this chapter we have an account of the taking of Babylon by Cyrus. Jeremiah had foretold that all nations should serve Nebuchadnezzar, his son, and his son's son; and then, that his empire should come to an end. Belshazzar was the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar, and the son of Evil-merodach. Cyrus had beaten him in battle, and then besieged the city. The king and inhabitants were confident and secure, because they thought it impregnable, and had twenty years' provisions within its walls; but, during the feast mentioned in this chapter, Cyrus surprised the city, by draining the river Euphrates, which ran through it, and entering along the channel of it\*.

1 **BELSHAZZAR** the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand. 2 Belshazzar, while he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple which [was] in Jerusalem; that the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, might drink therein; *which, as these vessels were put into the temple of his own god, was a profanation of them in his drunken frolick, contrary to the principles of his own religion.* 3 Then they brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of God which [was] at Jerusalem; and the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, drank in them. 4 They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone, *in a kind of triumph over the God of Israel.*

5 In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaster of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote. 6 Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another; *his guilty thoughts threw him into dreadful terror and confusion; and, with great fear and*

\* The particulars of this are recorded by Herodotus and Xenophon.

*impatience*, 7 The king cried aloud to bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers. [And] the king spake, and said to the wise [men] of Babylon, Whosoever shall read this writing, and show me the interpretation thereof, shall be clothed with scarlet, and [have] a chain of gold about his neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom, *or, one of the three presidents*. 8 Then came in all the king's wise [men:] but they could not read the writing, nor make known to the king the interpretation thereof; *it being probably written in the old Hebrew or Samaritan characters, which they did not understand*. 9 Then was king Belshazzar greatly troubled, and his countenance was changed in him, and his lords were astonished.

10 [Now] the queen by reason of the words of the king and his lords came into the banquet-house\*: [and] the queen spake, and said, O king, live for ever: let not thy thoughts trouble thee, nor let thy countenance be changed: 11 There is a man in thy kingdom, in whom [is] the spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of thy father light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, was found in him; whom the king Nebuchadnezzar thy father, the king, [I say,] thy father, *or grandfather*, made master of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, [and] soothsayers; 12 Forasmuch as an excellent spirit, and knowledge, and understanding, interpreting of dreams, and showing of hard sentences, and dissolving of doubts, were found in the same Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar: now let Daniel be called, and he will show the interpretation †. 13 Then was Daniel brought in before the king. [And] the king spake, and said unto Daniel, [Art] thou that Daniel, which [art] of the children of the captivity of Judah, whom the king my father brought out of Jewry? 14 I have even heard of thee, that the spirit of the gods [is] in thee, and [that] light and understanding and excellent wisdom is found in thee. 15 And now the wise [men,] the astrologers, have been brought in before me, that they should read this writing, and make known unto me the interpretation thereof: but they could not show the interpretation of the thing. 16 And I have heard of

\* This could not be his wife, for she was with him, but the queen mother, Nitocris, wife to Nebuchadnezzar, whom heathen historians represent as a prudent woman, and who had the chief administration of affairs.

† It is strange that Daniel should be unknown to the king; he was perhaps either removed, or had retired from court, or, which is more probable, the king knew nothing of his own affairs; which is confirmed by the account given us by profane historians, that he was a weak, luxurious prince.

thee, that thou canst make interpretations, and dissolve doubts : now if thou canst read the writing, and make known to me the interpretation thereof, thou shalt be clothed with scarlet, and [have] a chain of gold about thy neck, and shalt be the third ruler in the kingdom.

17 Then Daniel answered and said before the king, Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another ; *I neither deserve nor desire them* ; yet I will read the writing unto the king, and make known to him the interpretation : *but, before he read and explained the writing, he boldly and piously attempted to awaken the mind of the king to serious reflection.* 18 O thou king, the most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honour : 19 And for the majesty that he gave him, all people, nations, and languages, trembled and feared before him : whom he would he slew ; and whom he would he kept alive ; and whom he would he set up ; and whom he would he put down. 20 But when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him : 21 And he was driven from the sons of men ; and his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling [was] with the wild asses : they fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven ; till he knew that the most high God ruled in the kingdom of men, and [that] he appointeth over it whomsoever he will. 22 And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this ; 23 But hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven ; and they have brought the vessels of his house before thee, and thou, and thy lords, thy wives, and thy concubines, have drunk wine in them ; and thou hast praised the gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know : and the God in whose hand thy breath [is,] and whose [are] all thy ways, hast thou not glorified ; *thou hast not given honour to him who has the supreme disposal of thy affairs and thy life* : 24 Then was the part of the hand sent from him ; and this writing was written.

25 And this [is] the writing that was written, MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN. 26 This [is] the interpretation of the thing : MENE ; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it ; *he hath determined the days of thy life, and the continuance of thy kingdom ; both of which are now concluded.* 27 TEKEL ; thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting ; *thou*

*art light and worthless, therefore in strict justice he hath determined thy fate\**. 28 PERES, (*the simple form of Upharsin, which signifies, both to divide, and is the proper name of the Persians*), thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians. 29 Then commanded Belshazzar, and they clothed Daniel with scarlet, and [put] a chain of gold about his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom.

30 In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain, *together with his nobles, amidst their revelling, as Jeremiah had foretold, Jer. li. 57.* 31 And Darius the Median took the kingdom, [being] about threescore and two years old; *or rather, Cyaxares, uncle, by the mother's side, to Cyrus, who reigned about two years, and then Cyrus took possession of the whole empire.*

### REFLECTIONS.

1. SEE the connexion that subsists between sensuality and profaneness, and that both are presages of ruin. Belshazzar and his lords were spending the night in drinking and revelling; which was especially shameful when the city was besieged by a formidable enemy. Luxury and sensuality are bad at any time, but especially so when the judgments of God are abroad, and his afflicting hand is upon us. Men are often led in their drunken frolics to profaneness, and make a jest of what is sacred, to dishonour God and religion; and thus are hurried on to ruin. *Let us take heed to ourselves, lest at any time our hearts be overcharged with gluttony and drunkenness, and that day come upon us unawares.*

2. See the force of conscience. It was a sense of guilt which put Belshazzar into all this terror, and filled his lords with astonishment. Here was no thunder and lightning, no noise, no dreadful appearance; nothing but a hand and pen; for aught he knew, it might be some good tidings of victory, some favourable message from the gods which he was praising. But he was conscious of being sensual and profane, and therefore this appearance put him into a dreadful panic. God can strike terror into the most profligate sinners, by only letting their own thoughts loose upon them; so that neither company, splendour, nor wine, can calm their spirits. How desirable is it to keep our conscience clear, that we may have hope in God, and our minds be kept in perfect peace in all circumstances.

\* Homer and Virgil represent Jupiter as weighing the fates of men.

3. How great is the guilt, and how just the punishment, of those who will not take warning by the judgments of God upon others; especially their own ancestors. Daniel, as a wise and good man, and now above ninety years old, takes opportunity, while the king was expecting the interpretation, to reprove and admonish him. He reminds him of what had happened to his grandfather, and what a confession of Jehovah's power and supremacy was extorted from him; and adds, *yet thou his son hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this.* Thus inexcusable are the greatest of men, who will not observe and reflect upon the hand of God, especially when it is stretched out against their parents. Let us observe the operations of the Lord; and since the breath, and the ways, of all men are in his hands, let it be our care to glorify him.

4. Let us remember the just balance of God, and be solicitous not to be found wanting. We must all be weighed in it; be brought to judgment; and an exact scrutiny will be made into our characters. If we have been profane, sensual, hypocritical, or even formal professors, without the life and power of religion, we shall be found wanting, and be condemned. Let us therefore *judge ourselves, that we be not condemned of the Lord.* Indeed, in strict justice, we should all be found wanting; but Christ has a weight to turn the scale in favour of those who are true believers; and *blessed will be all those that have trusted in him.*

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## CHAPTER VI.

Darius advanceth Daniel to be his prime minister over all the kingdom; Daniel's enemies contrive a scheme to ruin him; he is cast into the den of lions, and delivered; his enemies are punished, and the God of Daniel honoured.—The apostle to the Hebrews refers to this story when he says, 'Some stopped the mouths of lions.'

1 **I**T pleased Darius to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes, *according to the number of provinces*, which should be over the whole kingdom; 2 And over these, three presidents; of whom Daniel [was] first; that the princes might give accounts unto them, *which they might inspect so as to be a check upon their conduct*, and the king should have no damage. 3 Then this Daniel

was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit [was] in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm of *Babylon*.

4 Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him; *they sought for some maledministration, some treachery, or fraud, but they could not so much as find a mistake.* 5 Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find [it] against him concerning the law of his God. 6 Then these presidents and princes assembled together to the king, and said thus unto him, King Darius, live for ever. 7 All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, the counsellors, and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any God or man \* for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions. 8 Now, O king, establish the decree, and sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not; *this was designed to compliment, and even make a god of, the king.* 9 Wherefore king Darius signed the writing and the decree.

10 Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime. *After the consecration of Solomon's temple no public sacrifices were to be offered but at Jerusalem: therefore, to show that he was a worshipper of Jehovah, the God of the Jews, the only true God, he looked toward Jerusalem when he prayed, as the Israelites were directed to do when captives; he scorned to abate this circumstance, or even to shut his window to conceal it, lest it should be imputed to shame or fear. This probably was family worship, else they would hardly have known what his custom was, or been witnesses of his practice in this instance.* 11 Then these men assembled, and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God. 12 Then they came near, and spake before the king concerning the king's decree; Hast thou not signed a decree that every man that shall ask [a petition] of any God or man within thirty days, save of thee, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions? The king

\* Man may signify, a deified man: for we can hardly suppose they would attempt to make it penal for a beggar to ask charity, or a child to ask bread. It was at best a monstrous, unaccountable proposal, in effect abolishing all religion.

answered and said, The thing [is] true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not. 13 Then answered they and said before the king, That Daniel, which [is] of the children of the captivity of Judah, regardeth not thee, O king, nor the decree that thou hast signed, but maketh his petition three times a day: *they speak of him with contempt as a Jew, a captive, and as highly ungrateful to the king.* 14 Then the king, when he heard [these] words, was sore displeased with himself, and set [his] heart on Daniel to deliver him: and he laboured till the going down of the sun to deliver him; *he considered all day how to secure him, or persuade his enemies to drop the prosecution, not having discovered till too late what they aimed at.* 15 Then these men assembled unto the king *in a tumultuous manner*, and said unto the king, Know, O king, that the law of the Medes and Persians [is,] That no decree nor statute which the king establisheth may be changed. 16 Then the king commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast [him] into the den of lions. [Now] the king, *who had probably heard of the deliverance of Daniel's companions from the furnace*, spake and said unto Daniel, Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee. *It was certainly most absurd as well as wicked to execute this sentence upon him, for serving a God whom he believed able and disposed to deliver him.* 17 And a stone was brought, and laid upon the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet, and with the signet of his lords; that the purpose might not be changed concerning Daniel\*.

18 Then the king went to his palace, and passed the night fasting, *that is, without supper, which was the chief meal*; neither were instruments of music brought before him; and, *or, though*, his sleep went from him. 19 Then the king arose very early in the morning, and went in haste unto the den of lions. 20 And when he came to the den he cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel; *between concern, hope, and despair*; [and] the king spake and said to Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, *a phrase which Daniel might have often used, in opposition to dead, though deified men, or lifeless gods, as idols were*; is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions? 21 Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live for ever. 22 My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not

\* This was a strange circumstance, as he was likely to be immediately devoured; but perhaps the king thought, that if he escaped the lions, he might be privately murdered there.



hurt me ; *such an angel as appeared in the furnace, and who intimidated the lions* : forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me ; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt ; *not having acted out of obstinacy, but from conscience.* 23 Then was the king exceeding glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God ; *this miracle was the reward of his faith and zeal, and gave the king spirit to punish Daniel's persecutors, and honour Daniel's God.*

24 And they king commanded, and they brought those men which had accused Daniel, *that is, the principal of them*, and they cast [them] into the den of lions, them, their children and their wives ; and the lions had the mastery of them, and brake all their bones in pieces or ever they came at the bottom of the den ; *being let down by cords, they were killed as fast as they went down by the lions, without staying to satisfy their hunger on their carcasses ; which plainly showed that Daniel's deliverance was miraculous.*

25 Then king Darius wrote unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth : Peace be multiplied unto you. 26 I make a decree, that in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel : for he [is] the living God, and steadfast for ever, and his kingdom [that] which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion [shall be even] unto the end ; *this was going a great way, but not far enough, to abolish idolatry, and establish the worship of Jehovah.* 27 He delivereth from trouble, and rescueth out of it, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions. 28 So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian, *his nephew, who succeeded him.*

## REFLECTIONS.

1. How careful should we be, whatever our stations are, to behave in an honest, prudent, unblameable manner. This was Daniel's praise. His enemies narrowly watched him, but could find no injustice, negligence, or even indiscretion in him. Thus should we study to behave with integrity, caution, and prudence ; *providing things honest in the sight of all men : that our good may not be evil spoken of ; and that they who seek occasion against us may find none.*

2. We have here a noble example of steadiness in religion. Daniel prayed in his family as often, and in the same manner as before, notwithstanding the edict. Neither his age, honour, nor great business, made him neglect his daily devotions. Many would have thought him imprudent in this; to save his life, he might surely have left off praying for a month; or have prayed privately: but he kept steadily to his pious practice, and would not omit his duty, even in the face of death. This is very contrary to many of those which in the present day are called prudential maxims; but prudence, as it is called, is often shameful cowardice, *loving the praise of men more than the praise of God*, and making way for other and greater omissions. Let the servants of the living God be steady and uniform in their devotions and obedience, and arm themselves with courage against all the terror and scorn of the world.

3. Observe the care which God takes of his faithful servants: he approved and rewarded Daniel's steadiness, though men might blame his rashness and imprudence. His power stopped the mouths of the furious lions; and He, who gave his angels charge to preserve Daniel, can deliver his servants in the greatest dangers. Let an humble confidence in his power restrain that fear of man which bringeth a snare. Let us faithfully do our duty; and then *he will be our refuge and strength; and a present help in time of trouble.*

4. See and adore the justice of God in the destruction of Daniel's persecutors. Their deep-laid schemes came to nothing; yea, *their evil doings came upon their own heads*; and even their families, which they thought to have aggrandized by Daniel's ruin, were destroyed with them: in the snare which they laid for him, were their own feet taken. Thus, as the psalmist observes, *the Lord is known by the judgments which he executeth; and the wicked is insnared in the work of his own hands.*

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## CHAPTER VII.

Daniel's vision of the four beasts ; of God's kingdom ; and the interpretation thereof.

1 **I**N the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, *that is, seventeen years before the events recorded in the last chapter*, Daniel had a dream and visions of his head upon his bed : then he wrote the dream, [and] told the sum of the matters. 2 Daniel spake and said, I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea ; *referring to the four greatest monarchies of the earth, and the violent commotion that attended their rise.* 3 And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another. 4 The first [was] like a lion, and had eagle's wings : I beheld till the wings thereof were plucked, and, *or wherewith*, it was lifted up from the earth, and made stand upon the feet as a man, and a man's heart was given to it \*. 5 And behold another beast, a second, like to a bear, and it raised up itself on one side, *or, it raised up one dominion*, and [it had] three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth of it : and they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh †. 6 After this I beheld, and lo another, like a leopard, *a fierce creature, which springs with exceeding velocity upon its prey*, which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl ; the beast had also four heads ; and dominion was given to it ‡. 7 After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly ; and it had great iron teeth : it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it : and it [was] diverse from all the beasts that [were] before it ; and it had ten

\* This refers to the Babylonian and Median monarchy, which arose on the ruin of the Assyrian. It was as a lion for fierceness, and as an eagle for speed ; but its wings were plucked ; many enemies arose in the last years of that empire ; and it then became more tame and tractable than before ; and its princes were taught to consider themselves as mere human creatures.

† This refers to the Persian empire ; it was subject to the Medes at the conquest of Babylon, but soon raised itself above them. The three ribs probably refer to Lydia, Egypt, and Babylon, which the Persians devoured ; their success made them greedy of more dominion. The Persians were remarkably cruel then, and continue so still.

‡ This refers to the Grecian empire, and the rapid conquests of Alexander ; his kingdom was divided into four, after his death, by his four generals.

horns\*. 8 I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in this horn [were] eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things; *that is, blasphemies and excommunications; referring to the pope, as will be explained afterwards.*—*The design of the next section is to comfort the people of God under the tyranny of this power, to assure them of God's universal providence, the security of Christ's kingdom, and the destruction of antichrist.*

9 I beheld till the thrones were cast down, *rather, till the thrones were set or placed*, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment [was] white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne [was like] the fiery flame, [and] his wheels [as] burning fire. 10 A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened; *intimating that God would appear by some remarkable judgments to put an end to the papal power.* 11 I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld [even] till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame. 12 As concerning the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away: yet their lives were prolonged for a season and time; *that is, the wasting of the other kingdoms shall be gradual; though they change their masters, and have not their former power, yet they shall continue as nations; but the destruction of the last shall be great and entire, and no kingdom shall succeed it.* 13 I saw in the night visions, and, behold, [one] like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him, *that is, the angels brought him near.* *From this prophecy the Jews learned to speak of the Messiah as the Son of man, and of his kingdom as the kingdom of God and heaven.* 14 And there was given him dominion and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion [is] an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom [that] which shall not be destroyed: *some understand this of Christ's power after his ascension; but it is rather designed to intimate, that the destruction of the papal empire shall make way for the greater triumph of Christ's kingdom.*

\* This refers to the Roman empire; the horns denote its power, and the number of them refers to the ten kingdoms into which it was divided.

15 I Daniel was grieved in my spirit in the midst of [my] body, and the visions of my head troubled me; *that is, the terrible appearances in the visions, and the confusions and persecutions to which they probably referred.* 16 I came near unto one of them that stood by, *to one of the attendant angels,* and asked him the truth of all this. So he told me, and made me know the interpretation of the things. 17 These great beasts, which are four, [are] four kings, [which] shall arise out of the earth. 18 But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever; *the kingdom of Christ shall survive all these empires, and the saints shall reign for ever.* 19 Then I would know the truth of the fourth beast, which was diverse from all the others, *it being first a kingdom, then a commonwealth, then an empire, then a divided empire, and then a mixture of civil and ecclesiastical power, exceeding dreadful,* whose teeth [were of] iron, and his nails [of] brass; [which] devoured, brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with his feet; *those conquests which the Romans could not possess themselves, they gave to their allies;* 20 And of the ten horns that [were] in his head, *that is, the ten kingdoms, into which the Roman empire was divided; or rather, that part of it which did not belong to the former beasts, which amidst all the confusion of the empire was still called ten kingdoms from their first number;* and [of] the other which came up, *that is, antichrist, or the Romish hierarchy which arose from a very small beginning, and before whom three fell, three of those kingdoms within the territory of the pope, that is, Lombardy, Ravenna, and the neighbourhood of Rome;* even [of] that horn that had eyes *like a man, like a seer, who had great penetration, and pretended to be inspired,* and a mouth that spake very great things, *blasphemies, bulls, curses, and excommunications,* whose look [was] more stout than his fellows, *who claimed superiority over the other horns, that is, all the princes of the earth.* 21 I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; *persecuting all that opposed the papal usurpations.* 22 Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom. 23 Thus he said, The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces. 24 And the ten horns out of this kingdom [are] ten kings [that] shall arise: and another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the

first, and he shall subdue three kings. 25 And he shall speak [great] words against the most High, or, as the most High; assuming arrogant titles, such as belonged to God alone; and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws, instituting sacred times, deposing kings, and dispensing with laws, human and divine: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time; that is, this power shall continue a year, two years, and half a year, meaning prophetic years\*. 26 But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy [it] unto the end; Christ shall destroy him by the brightness of his coming. 27 And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom [is] an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him; then shall commence the flourishing state of christianity for one thousand years. 28 Hitherto [is] the end of the matter. As for me Daniel, my cogitations much troubled me; the prospect of such confusions, persecutions, and troubles greatly affected me; and my countenance changed in me, I became pale: but I kept the matter in my heart, and reflected upon it, and have now recorded it for the benefit of the church.

### REFLECTIONS.

1. THE general view here given of the state of the world, is mournful but just. A stormy sea, like winds contending, empires like furious beasts, full of tyranny and cruelty. Even the papal kingdom, that pretends to be the kingdom of Christ, differs in some respects, but in this especially, is like the rest, the support of idolatry and tyranny.

2. It is a great consolation to God's people in all ages, that he reigneth. Neither days nor years make any alteration in him; his kingdom ruleth over all, and thousands of angels minister unto him. He hath committed it to his Son, and his kingdom shall not be moved: while others are shaken, his shall be stable; while all others are destroyed, his shall endure.

\* Thus Nebuchadnezzar was to continue seven times, that is, seven common years; but this is sometimes called forty-two months, (as in Rev. xiii. 5.), or twelve hundred and sixty prophetic days, that is, so many years. These were to commence when the pope became a horn, or a governor; which was in the year 756; so that the pope's dominion will probably end, and the triumph of Christ's kingdom begin, about the year 2000.

3. See the honour and happiness of God's people; they are saints; are devoted to him, and holy, though persecuted. Men may attempt to weary them out, yet they are always dear to God. This has a favourable aspect on the protestant cause; all that separate themselves from the corruptions of the Romish church, and from the wickedness of the world, shall be kings to God, shall reign with Christ, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

This chapter relates to the Persian and Grecian monarchies, as explained by the angel; it is not written in Chaldee, but in Hebrew, and this language is continued to the end of the book, as it chiefly concerns the Jews and their affairs.

1 **I**N the third year of the reign of king Belshazzar a vision appeared unto me, [even unto] me Daniel, after that which appeared unto me at the first. 2 And I saw in a vision, *while awake, not in a dream, as before*, and it came to pass, when I saw, that I [was] at Shushan [in] the palace, which [is] in the province of Elam; and I saw in a vision, and I was by the river of Ulai. 3 Then I lifted up mine eyes, and saw, and, behold, there stood before the river a ram which had [two] horns: and the [two] horns [were] high; but one [was] higher than the other, and the higher came up last; *an emblem of the kingdoms of the Medes and Persians united\**. 4 I saw the ram pushing westward, and northward, and southward; *referring to the countries conquered by the Persian kings*; so that no beasts, *that is, no kingdom*, might stand before him, neither [was there any] that could deliver out of his hand; but he did according to his will, and became great. 5 And as I was considering, behold, an he goat came from the west on the face of the whole earth, and touched not the ground: and the goat [had] a notable horn between his eyes; *referring to the Grecian empire, especially under Alexander the Great, and the swiftness of his conquests; who in less than eight years overran the greatest part of*

\* Ancient writers tell us that the ram was the ensign of the Persians, and is still to be seen with the horns, one higher, and the other lower, on the pillars of Persepolis: and this circumstance in the vision, intimated that the Persian kingdom, though it arose after the Medes, should become more considerable.

*Asia* \*. 6 And he came to the ram that had [two] horns, which I had seen standing before the river, and ran unto him in the fury of his power, *that is, attacked the Persians*. 7 And I saw him come close unto the ram, and he was moved with choler against him, and smote the ram, and brake his two horns: and there was no power in the ram to stand before him, but he cast him down to the ground, and stamped upon him: and there was none that could deliver the ram out of his hand. *The three expressions of smiting, casting down, and stamping upon, may refer to Alexander's three victories over Darius, at Granicum, Issus, and Arbela* †. 8 Therefore the he goat waxed very great: and when he was strong the great horn was broken; *he died about the age of thirty-three, in the height of his glory*: and for it came up four notable ones toward the four winds of heaven, *the empire being then divided among his four generals*. 9 And out of one of them came forth a little horn ‡, which waxed exceeding great, toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant [land;] *toward Egypt, Syria, and Judea*. 10 And it waxed great, [even] to the host of heaven; and it cast down [some] of the host, *that is, the Jewish people, who were in a peculiar manner the care of God, and of the stars, persons of dignity, priests and nobles, to the ground, and stamped upon them*. 11 Yea, he magnified [himself] even to the prince of the host, *Christ was put to death by the Roman power prevailing in Judea, and by him the daily [sacrifice] was taken away, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down; Antiochus made it cease for a while, but the Romans took it away, and destroyed the temple, which he only polluted*. 12 And an host was given [him] against the daily [sacrifice] by reason of transgression, *the wickedness of the Jews at that time, was the reason of its being given up to the Romans, and it cast down the truth to the ground; and it practised, and prospered; referring to a breach of treaty which the Romans were guilty*

\* The Greeks of Macedonia were called Ægeada, or, the people of the goat, two hundred years before the time of Daniel, from the story of their founder Caranus, who was directed by the oracle to settle where he should find a flock of goats; which he accordingly did, calling the place Ægea, or goats-town, and making the figure of a goat his ensign.

† When Alexander marched against Jerusalem, Judas the high priest went out to meet him, and showed him this prophecy of Daniel; which encouraged him in his enterprise, and made him kind to the Jews.

‡ Here commentators are much divided; most of them interpret this of Antiochus, a great persecutor of the Jews: but particular kings are not called horns, but kingdoms only. I therefore rather think, with Sir Isaac Newton, that it refers to the Romans, who conquered Greece, and then became a horn, or, a powerful nation.



of, or to their persecuting christians, and labouring to extirpate christianity.

13 Then I heard one saint, or angel, speaking, and another saint said unto that certain [saint] which spake, How long [shall be] the vision [concerning] the daily [sacrifice] *being taken away*, and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot? *how long shall Judea be desolate, and the Jews dispersed? or, how far shall this vision extend?*  
 14 And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days, *that is, years*; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed\*.

15 And it came to pass, when I, [even] I Daniel, had seen the vision, and sought for the meaning, then, behold, there stood before me as the appearance of a man. 16 And I heard a man's voice between [the banks of] Ulai, which called, and said, Gabriel, make this [man] to understand the vision. 17 So he came near where I stood: and when he came, I was afraid, and fell upon my face: but he said unto me, Understand, O son of man: for at the time of the end [shall be] the vision; *that is, Consider and mind, for the vision refers to the end of the Jewish state.* 18 Now as he was speaking with me, I was in a deep sleep on my face toward the ground, *that is, as insensible of every thing but the present impression upon my mind, as if I had been asleep*: but he touched me, and set me upright. 19 And he said, Behold, I will make thee know what shall be in the last end of the indignation: for at the time appointed the end [shall be]; *that is, the end of God's indignation against the Jews.* 20 The ram which thou sawest having two horns [are] the kings of Media and Persia. 21 And the rough goat [is] the king of Grecia: and the great horn that [is] between his eyes is the first king. 22 Now that being broken, whereas four stood up for it, four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation, but not in his power; *they shall neither be equal in power, nor extent of empire.* 23 And in the latter time of their kingdom, *that is, of the Grecian kingdom, when their power began to decline, especially over Judea, by the growing power of the Romans, when the transgressors, or, the transgressions*

\* This is an unanswerable objection against applying this prophetic vision to Antiochus, for his conquest and profanations continued no longer than three years; consequently, there can be no sense in which it could be two thousand three hundred days: it intimates that the end of the desolation of the sanctuary, and the restoration of the Jews, should be two thousand three hundred years from the time spoken of; which Bp. Newton reckons from the time when Alexander invaded Asia; which was about three hundred and thirty years before Christ, (and which will bring it to about the year 2000), to the commencement of the fall of antichrist, the Jews' restoration, and the glorious triumph of Christ's kingdom.

*of the Jews, are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, that is, a kingdom of great policy, art, prudence, and valour, as the Romans were, shall stand up. 24 And his power shall be mighty, he shall effect great things, but not by his own power; rather by fraud and under-hand dealing and the divine permission, than by force of arms: and he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper, and practise, and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people; that is, the Jews, or rather, the Christians. 25 And through his policy also, or treachery, in not observing treaties, he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify [himself] in his heart, and by peace shall destroy many; taking opportunity in time of peace to make war, and oppose christianity: he shall also stand up against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand; he shall crumble to pieces by degrees, and not be destroyed, as the former empires were, by an extraordinary display of divine power. 26 And the vision of the evening and the morning which was told [is] true: wherefore shut thou up the vision, that no offence be given to the Persians, nor premature perplexity to the Jews; for it [shall be] for many days. 27 And I Daniel fainted, and was sick [certain] days; my spirit was weakened by these visions and the foresight of these troubles; afterward I rose up, and did the king's business; and I was astonished at the vision, but none understood [it;] the meaning was not then known, or, none perceived by my countenance that I was troubled.*

### REFLECTIONS.

1. WE are here taught the folly of ambition; which is remarkably apparent in the history of Alexander, referred to in *v. 7, &c.* He conquered the world, but died of a drunken surfeit in the prime of his days; his captains shared his conquests, and his vast empire was broken to pieces. With what pity and contempt may we think of the renowned heroes of antiquity; who were so active and unwearied; did so much mischief; and yet reaped such little benefit by it: but God was answering his own purposes by all.

2. It should be our desire and care to be well acquainted with the prophecies, and the mind of God in them. Daniel sought their meaning; considered and reflected on it. The angels inquired one of another about it. This shows us how worthy those things are of our study; and it justly reproves those who will

take no pains to understand these parts of scripture, nor give themselves the trouble to attend to those expositions of them, which, after much labour and study, ministers are from time to time giving. If properly considered, they would be a great confirmation of our faith; would lead us to adore the omniscience of God; and convince us of his universal government and influence.

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## CHAPTER IX.

Daniel, understanding from the prophecies of Jeremiah, that the seventy years' captivity was now drawing to a close, pours out his soul in prayer to God, and earnestly supplicates pardon and restoration for his captive people. The angel Gabriel informs him, that the city should be rebuilt and peopled, and should continue so for seventy prophetic weeks, or four hundred and ninety years; at the end of which it should be utterly destroyed for putting the Messiah to death.

1 **I**N the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans; *that is, in the time of Cyaxares, Cyrus's uncle, who was made king of Babylon by him;* 2 In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem; *several passages in Jeremiah determined them to seventy years, from the fourth year of Jehoiakim, when Daniel and many others were carried captive: this period ended in the first year of Darius, or Cyrus, who reigned with him: but as the promise of the restoration was conditional, viz., that they should seek the Lord with their whole heart, Daniel adds,*

3 And I set my face unto the Lord GOD, *that is, toward the temple,* to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes; *the customary forms of mourning:* 4 And I prayed unto the LORD my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy, *fulfilling all its gracious promises,* to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments; 5 We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled even by departing from thy precepts and from

thy judgments; *a confession similar to that prescribed by Solomon at the dedication of the temple, to be used in their captivity,* (1 Kings viii. 47.) 6 Neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets, which spake in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. 7 O Lord, righteousness [belongeth] unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day; to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, [that are] near, and [that are] far off, through all the countries whither thou has driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against thee. 8 O Lord, to us [belongeth] confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee. 9 To the Lord our God [belong] mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him. 10 Neither have we obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets. 11 Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey thy voice: therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that [is] written in the law of Moses the servant of God, *that is, the solemn protestation what God would do,* because we have sinned against him. 12 And he hath confirmed, *that is, performed,* his words, which he spake against us, and against our judges that judged us, *and who should have prevented it,* by bringing upon us a great evil: for under the whole heaven hath not been done as hath been done upon Jerusalem. 13 As [it is] written in the law of Moses, all this evil is come upon us: yet made we not our prayer before the LORD our God, *with penitent and humble spirits,* that we might turn from our iniquities, and understand thy truth. 14 Therefore hath the LORD watched upon the evil, and brought it upon us, *as a magistrate, to see execution done:* for the LORD our God [is] righteous in all his works which he doeth: for we obeyed not his voice. 15 And now, O Lord our God, that hast brought thy people forth out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and hast gotten thee renown, as at this day; *an event which we still commemorate to thy honour, and take encouragement from;* we have sinned, we have done wickedly.

16 O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let thine anger and thy fury, *which is according to righteousness,* be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy mountain: because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy people [are become] a reproach to all [that are]

about us. 17 Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake. 18 O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee, for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies; *we are all demerit, but thou infinite in mercy.* 19 O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city and thy people are called by thy name.

20 And whiles I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God for the holy mountain of my God, *for rebuilding his temple and restoring his worship;* 21 Yea, whiles I [was] speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation, *to strengthen and encourage me.* 22 And he informed [me,] and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding. 23 At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to show [thee;] for thou [art] greatly beloved: therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision. 24 Seventy weeks\* are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. 25 Know therefore and understand, [that] from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince [shall be] seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks; the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. 26 And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof [shall be] with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. 27 And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make [it] desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.

\* See the Sermon at the end of this Book.

## REFLECTIONS.

1. LET the example of Daniel recommend to us the study of the scriptures, and especially the prophecy before us. He was conversant in, and carefully studied, the books of the prophecies; especially Jeremiah's. Though he was a person of great age and great business, and a prime minister, yet he could find time for this employment. When God gives us his word, it becomes us to study it; to consider the vision, that we may understand the matter. It is not sufficient to hear it read and explained, but it must be afterwards reviewed and reflected upon. Thus shall we become acquainted with the holy scriptures, which are able to make us wise unto salvation.

2. We may hence learn much of the nature of prayer, and the manner in which it is to be presented to God. We ought to address him with fixed attention and deep humility; under an awful sense of his greatness and majesty, his patience and mercy. We particularly see that a confession of sin ought to have a considerable share in our prayers: to excite our repentance; to cherish our humility; to caution us against sin; and to make Christ welcome to our hearts. That we are to ask mercy from a reliance on the goodness of God, and his covenant; and for the Lord Christ's sake; and not from any confidence in our own righteousness. That we ought to be earnest and importunate in our addresses to God, and to stir up ourselves to take hold on him.

3. We have here great encouragement to such supplications as these. While Daniel was speaking, God heard; yea, when he began, God sent an angel to comfort him. We have no reason to expect that angels will bring us messages of mercy; but God has many other ways of granting the desires of his people; he is always near to the souls that sincerely seek him. He is particularly pleased with the prayers which we offer up for his church and the interest of religion and the honour of his name; and *has never said to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain.*

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## CHAPTER X.

This chapter is an introduction to a remarkable vision and prophecy, containing a series of the principal events relating to the church of God, even to the end of the world; and it is delivered in the plainest words, without types and images, as in the former visions.

1 **I**N the third year of Cyrus king of Persia, *when Daniel was above ninety years old*, a thing was revealed unto Daniel, whose name was called Belteshazzar; and the thing [was] true, but the time appointed [was] long, *that is, to the conclusion of the vision*: and he understood the thing, and had understanding of the vision; *he understood the general meaning of it.* 2 In those days I Daniel was mourning three full weeks; *or, three weeks of days, as in the original, to distinguish it from weeks of years, a reckoning used by the prophets: I mourned because the building of the temple was hindered by the slanders of the enemies of the Jews.* 3 I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, *as the Persians used to do*, till three whole weeks were fulfilled. 4 And in the four and twentieth day of the first month, as I was by the side of the great river, which [is] Hiddekel, *in person, not in a vision*; 5 Then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins [were] girded with fine gold of Uphaz: 6 His body also [was] like the beryl, *or, the sky colour*, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in colour to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude\*. 7 And I Daniel alone saw the vision: for the men that were with me saw not the vision; *the servants who attended were overpowered by the lustre, and saw nothing distinctly*; but a great quaking fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves. 8 Therefore I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, *I looked like a dead corpse*, and I retained no strength. 9 Yet heard I the voice of his words: and when I heard the voice of his words, then was I in a deep sleep on my face, *or, in a swoon*, and my face toward the ground.

\* This much resembles St. John's vision of Christ, in Rev. ch. i., and probably it was he that appeared on this occasion.

10 And, behold, an hand touched me, which set me upon my knees and [upon] the palms of my hands; *one of the angels that attended the Shekinah, (or Christ,) raised and strengthened me by degrees.* 11 And he said unto me, O Daniel, a man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak unto thee, and stand upright: for unto thee am I now sent. And when he had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling. 12 Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, *from the time that thou hast fasted, and prayed to know why God did not prosper the Jews, why the work was retarded, and what sins of Israel had provoked God to frown upon them after he had restored them,* thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words, *as a token of God's gracious regard to thee.* 13 But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia\*. 14 Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days: for yet the vision [is] for [many] days. 15 And when he had spoken such words unto me, I set my face toward the ground, and I became dumb, *and silently listened to him.* 16 And behold, [one] like the similitude of the sons of men, *an angel in a human form,* touched my lips: then I opened my mouth, and spake, and said unto him that stood before me, O my lord, by the vision my sorrows are turned upon me, and I have retained no strength. 17 For how can the servant of this my lord talk with this my lord? *how can I converse with that glorious person yonder, if I cannot speak to thee?* for as for me, straightway there remained no strength in me, neither

\* This is an exceeding difficult passage. Some have supposed that it refers to the then king of Persia's being unfavourable to the Jews; and to the angel, by the assistance of Michael, one of the chief princes, disposing the other king of Persia to be more favourable. But others think, with more probability, that it relates to some things concerning the angelic world: It seems to intimate, that the kingdoms of this world are under the guardianship of particular angels, who have their respective provinces; and that they have a general commission from God to manage the affairs of them according to their wisdom: so that sometimes their schemes may be unknown to others, and therefore they may in some measure oppose one another. Others again suppose, the opposition to this angel from the prince of Persia was from an evil spirit: and if good angels have the guardianship of kingdoms, evil angels may watch over them for mischief; and so there may be an opposition; which one can hardly suppose there would be between the good angels. And this text may be illustrated by that in Mark v. 8., where the devils, which Christ cast out, besought him not to send them out of that country, that being their province; so that making observations on the men of it, and knowing their state, they might be more able to carry on their malicious designs there than elsewhere. God may, for wise reasons, sometimes suffer the designs of evil spirits to embarrass the angels. This angel is supposed to remain with the kings of Persia, to oppose any design against the Jews.



is there breath left in me. 18 Then there came again and touched me [one] like the appearance of a man, and he strengthened me. 19 And said, O man greatly beloved, fear not : peace [be] unto thee; *the vision portends no evil to thee, but is an instance of the divine regard*; be strong, yea, be strong. And when he had spoken unto me, I was strengthened, and said, Let my lord speak ; for thou hast strengthened me. 20 Then said he, Knowest thou wherefore I come unto thee ? and now will I return to fight with, or to oppose, the prince of Persia : and when I am gone forth, lo, the prince of Grecia shall come\*. But I will shew thee that which is noted in the scripture of truth ; or, *the true writings, the book of God's counsels and decrees, not in the Bible* : and [there is] none that holdeth with me in these things, but Michael your prince ; *that is, perhaps, none of the guardian angels holdeth with me in your affairs, but Michael the prince of the Jews ; the principal person whose assistance I depend upon : he is elsewhere called the archangel, and probably signifies Christ.*

## REFLECTIONS.

1. It is a great grief to good men to see the work of God hindered, and the interests of the church neglected. Daniel was greatly concerned for the prosperity of God's people, and grieved that the building of the temple was retarded; its enemies so active, and its friends so indolent and selfish. And pious men will thus be affected, when the cause of God is declining; *when iniquity abounds, and the love of many waxeth cold.* This should dispose us to enter tenderly into the concerns of the church; to lament the coldness and indifference of its friends; to guard against a selfish spirit; and diligently to seek the prosperity of Christ's kingdom.

2. In times of degeneracy and declension, humiliation and prayer are highly becoming the people of God. Daniel, though a very great and a very old man, set his heart to understand the state of the church and of religion. He chastened his soul by fasting; mourned the decay of piety and zeal; and earnestly sought the divine favour for his people. Thus it becomes us to humble ourselves before God, and seek the revival of religion with our

\* Some understand this to refer to Alexander's purpose of invading Persia: others, that the angel of the Grecian empire would offer his reasons in the court of heaven for translating the empire from the Persians to the Greeks, who would be more favourable to the Jews.

whole hearts. And as God can by secret and unexpected means cause it to revive and increase, we may expect a gracious answer to such fervent supplications; and our piety and zeal will be accepted and rewarded.

3. Whatever weakness and danger may seize us, we have encouragement to seek and hope for strength from above. Daniel, being overpowered both in body and spirit by this vision, was gradually strengthened by the angel. Thus can God strengthen his servants when they are languishing in body, or their spirits are dejected; when afflictions press them down, or the terrors of God overwhelm them. And we have peculiar reason to expect divine strength, when, like Daniel, we are most sensible of our own weakness, and humbly depend upon divine aid. *God giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.*

4. The guardianship of angels over states and kingdoms affords a pleasing reflection, though there is, and must be, much obscurity resting upon it. By whatever methods they carry on their grand affairs, it is in much wisdom appointed that they should be invisible to us; since they would otherwise overpower our senses, as this vision did Daniel's. Their interposition shows God's regard to the happiness of mankind. It adds to the pleasure of this reflection, to observe, that God's church is under the care of Christ, the Lord of angels: that he presides over it, and manages its affairs. That the angels who preside over other kingdoms are under his direction; and that the devils, who seek their ruin, are subject to his control. In the strength of Michael our prince, let us confide; and if we faithfully hold to him, he will hold with us in all things.

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## CHAP. XI. 1—30.

The angel had told Daniel that he would inform him what was recorded in the scripture of truth, or the true writings, the book of God's decrees; this he here proceeds to do.

1 **ALSO I**, in the first year of Darius the Mede, [even] I, stood to confirm and to strengthen him, *to encourage him to give liberty to the Jews.*—*In the following verses the angel foretells a series of*

events relating to the state of the world, and particularly of the nations with whom the Jews were concerned; and then of those that relate to the christian church to the end of the world: and a most amazing prophecy it is. 2 And now will I show thee the truth. Behold, there shall stand up yet three kings in Persia besides Cyrus, that is, Cambyses, Smerdis, and Darius Hystaspes who succeeded Cyrus; and the fourth shall be far richer than [they] all: and by his strength through his riches he shall stir up all against the realm of Grecia; that is, Xerxes, whose wealth is mentioned by many of the heathen writers, shall stir up all his subjects and allies against Greece; which accordingly he invaded with the most numerous army that ever was brought together, amounting to above four millions. 3 And a mighty king shall stand up, that shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will; referring to Alexander the Great, and his invading Persia and other eastern nations, none daring to oppose him. 4 And when he shall stand up, his kingdom shall be broken, and shall be divided toward the four winds of heaven; and not to his posterity, nor according to his dominion which he ruled: for his kingdom shall be plucked up, even for others besides those\*.

5 And the king of the south shall be strong, and [one] of his princes; and he shall be strong above him, and have dominion; his dominion [shall be] a great dominion †. 6 And in the end of years, after several years, they shall join themselves together; for the king's daughter of the south shall come to the king of the north to make an agreement; referring to the marriage between Antiochus Theus king of Syria, and Berenice, daughter of Ptolemy Philadelphus, king of Egypt; on which account he put away his former wife: but she shall not retain the power of the arm; neither shall he stand, nor his arm: but she shall be given up, and they that brought her, and he that begat her, and he that strengthened her in [these] times ‡. 7 But out of a

\* Accordingly he was destroyed in the midst of his prosperity; his brother and two sons were slain, and his four generals made themselves kings; but neither of them had such a kingdom as he, having divided the empire between them, though some others shared in the division.

† Two of the most considerable of these kingdoms were those of Egypt and Syria; the former is called here the king of the south, the latter, the king of the north, who, between them, soon swallowed up the two others. Judea lay between them, and had concerns with both; the king of the north was the stronger, namely, Selenens Nicator, or, The conqueror; who, though weak at first, yet, by Ptolemy's favour and countenance, became stronger than Ptolemy himself, from whom he got the power over Judea, and had at last near a third part of Alexander's empire.

‡ At first she had great sway, but soon lost it: and Antiochus recalled his

branch of her roots shall [one] stand up in his estate, *or, a plant shall stand in his room*, which shall come with an army, and shall enter into the fortress of the king of the north, and shall deal against them, and shall prevail; *that is, Ptolemy Evergetes, her brother, who warred with Seleucus Callinicus, king of Syria, (who slew Berenice and her little son,) he invaded Syria, and had great success:* 8 And shall also carry captives into Egypt their gods, with their princes, [and] with their precious vessels of silver and of gold; and he shall continue [more] years than the king of the north\*. 9 So the king of the south shall come into [his] kingdom, *that is, the kingdom of the north*, and shall then return into his own land. 10 But his sons, *that is, the sons of the king of Syria, viz., Ceraunus and Antiochus the Great*, shall be stirred up, and shall assemble a multitude of great forces: and [one] *that is, Antiochus the Great, (Ceraunus being poisoned by his generals),* shall certainly come, and overflow, and pass through: then shall he return, and be stirred up, [even] to his fortress; *taking advantage of the effeminacy of Ptolemy Philopater, the son of Evergetes, he took Raphia, a strong fortress on the borders of Egypt.* 11 And the king of the south shall be moved with choler, and shall come forth and fight with him, [even] with the king of the north: and he, *that is, the king of the north, Antiochus the Great,* shall set forth a great multitude; but the multitude shall be given into his hand, *that is, into the hands of Ptolemy Philopater, Antiochus's army being beaten, and he forced to retreat.* 12 [And] when he hath taken away the multitude, his heart shall be lifted up; and he shall cast down [many] ten thousands: but he shall not be strengthened [by it †.] 13 For the king of the north shall return, and shall set forth a multitude greater than the former, and shall certainly come after certain years with a great army and with much riches; *and accordingly Antiochus the Great, fourteen years after the former attack, again invaded Egypt with great force and success.* 14 And in those times there shall many stand up against the king of the south: also the robbers of thy people shall exalt themselves to establish the vision; but they

former wife; who procured the murder of Berenice and her attendants, and of a son that she had by him; her father, who had strengthened her, being dead a little before.

\* He carried back great treasures, and two thousand five hundred Egyptian idols, which Cambyses had taken away when he invaded Egypt, and he survived Seleucus about five years.

† He grew very debauched and cruel, attempted to enter the temple at Jerusalem, slew forty thousand Jews at Alexandria in Egypt, and so weakened his own kingdom: he then died, and left a son four years old.

shall fall\*. 15 So the king of the north shall come, and cast up a mount, and take the most fenced cities: and the arms of the south shall not withstand, neither his chosen people, neither [shall there be any] strength to withstand; *Antiochus, wishing to recover Judea, shall come again and take many cities from the king of Egypt, whose army shall be besieged in Sidon, a strong city, and obliged to surrender.* 16 But he that cometh against him shall do according to his own will, and none shall stand before him: and he shall stand in the glorious land, *that is, Antiochus shall stand in Judea, which by his hand shall be consumed; or rather, perfected; referring to the kindness he showed to the Jews who submitted to him.* 17 He shall also set his face to enter into Egypt with the strength of his whole kingdom, and upright ones with him; *or rather, with an equal agreement between them, that is, a treaty between the young king of Egypt and Antiochus, that Ptolemy should marry Cleopatra, his daughter; thus shall he do: and he shall give him the daughter of women, that is, one of the most beautiful of women, corrupting her; endeavouring to keep a separate interest in his daughter, contrary to her husband's: but she shall not stand [on his side,] neither be for him; she accordingly joined with her husband against her father, in sending an embassy to Rome to congratulate the Romans on their victory over him.* 18 After this shall he turn his face unto the isles, and shall take many: but a prince for his own behalf shall cause the reproach offered by him to cease; without his own reproach he shall cause [it] to turn upon him; *that is, he shall attack the maritime countries of Greece, who were confederate with the Romans; but the Roman general, Scipio, to avenge the affront offered to their allies, shall attack and defeat him, and he and his successors shall become tributary to the Romans.* 19 Then he shall turn his face toward the fort of his own land: but he shall stumble and fall, and not be found to pay this tribute; *he went to plunder the temple of Elymais, but was there slain by the inhabitants.* 20 Then shall stand up in his estate a raiser of taxes [in] the glory of the kingdom; *or, as in the margin of our bibles, one that causeth an exactor to pass over, that is, Seleucus Philopater, his son, who paid an hundred talents yearly*

\* As the prince was but an infant, there were domestic factions and rebellions in the provinces of Egypt, and some revolted Jews (who were a sort of banditti) exalted themselves against him; but his generals overcame them, and placed a garrison even in Jerusalem; so that they helped to confirm this prophecy.

to the Romans; but within few days, or years, he shall be destroyed, neither in anger, nor in battle\*.

21 And in his estate shall stand up a vile person, *Antiochus Epiphanes*, to whom they shall not give the honour of the kingdom: but he shall come in peaceably, and obtain the kingdom by flatteries; *his accession shall be at first disputed, he not being the right heir: but by flattering the Syrians and Romans, and making them rich presents, he shall get possession of the kingdom.* 22 And with the arms of a flood shall they be overthrown from before him, and shall be broken; *the arms of the overflower, that is, his opposers, shall be overcome by him*; yea, also the prince of the covenant. 23 And after the league [made] with him he shall work deceitfully: for he shall come up, and shall become strong with a small people†. 24 He shall enter peaceably even upon the fattest places of the province; and he shall do [that] which his fathers have not done, nor his fathers' fathers; he shall scatter among them the prey, and spoil, and riches; *in his debate with the king of Egypt, he shall exceed his fathers in profusion; as he actually did; and bribed the king of Egypt's officers*: [yea,] and he shall forecast his devices against the strong holds, even for a time; *he shall employ some years in his preparations.* 25 And he shall stir up his power and his courage against the king of the south with a great army; *Antiochus Epiphanes shall muster up the power of Syria, and with great courage give battle to Ptolemy Philometor*; and the king of the south shall be stirred up to battle with a very great and mighty army; but he shall not stand: for they shall forecast devices against him. 26 Yea, they that feed of the portion of his meat shall destroy him, and his army shall overflow, or, *he overflowed*: and many shall fall down slain; *Ptolemy shall be destroyed by some of his own servants.* 27 And both these kings' hearts [shall be] to do mischief, and they shall speak lies at one table; *alluding to a treaty between the two kings, at a magnificent entertainment at Memphis in Egypt*; but it shall not prosper; *there shall still be no friendship, they shall endeavour to circumvent one another, but neither of them shall succeed*: for yet the end of the war [shall be] at the time appointed. 28 Then

\* He was destroyed by his treasurer, Heliodorus, the instrument of his oppression and cruelty in raising the taxes, and particularly in plundering the temple of Jerusalem; he reigned only twelve years.

† Some understand this of a league between him and the king of Egypt, in which he behaved deceitfully; others understand it, more probably, of his procuring Jason to be the Jewish high priest, and after him Menelaus, who offered him more money: in both cases it is a fact that he acted deceitfully: he came from Rome with a few attendants, and yet attained to this power.

shall he return into his land with great riches; and his heart [shall be] against the holy covenant, *that is, against the people of the Jews*, and he shall do [exploits,] and return to his own land\*. 29 At the time appointed he shall return, and come toward the south; but it shall not be as the former, or as the latter; *after two years he shall invade Egypt again; but the latter invasion shall not be like the former; it shall turn out to his disadvantage and shame.*

30 For the ships of Chittim, *the coast of Greece and Italy*, shall come against him; *referring to the arrival of Popilius, the Roman ambassador, in Egypt, who commanded him in the name of the Romans not to molest Egypt, which they had taken under their protection*: therefore he shall be grieved, and return, and have indignation against the holy covenant: so shall he do; he shall even return, and have intelligence with them that forsake the holy covenant †.

### REFLECTION.

LET me here only remind you in general, how particular and circumstantial this prophecy is. No historian gives so concise and comprehensive an account of the affairs of these kingdoms as this prophecy does. It is a glorious attestation of the truth of the Bible, and an evident proof of the foreknowledge of God. No one could thus declare the times and seasons, but he who liath them in his own power. All these contingent events were fore-known and foretold by him. The enemies of revelation pretend, that it was written after the events; contrary to all the proof which the nature of things in such cases will admit of. But, by their opposition to the Bible, they are only, like the infidel Jews, *v. 14., establishing the vision, and confirming the prophecy: for no one word of God shall fall to the ground.*

\* Jason, whom Antiochus had deposed, hearing a report of Antiochus's death in Egypt, seized the priesthood again by violence, and drove out his rival. Antiochus, thinking that the Jews had revolted, attacked Jerusalem, slew forty thousand, sold as many for slaves, and polluted the temple with swine's flesh.

† Menelaus, and his party at Jerusalem, took up arms for him, and assisted him even against their own country and Jerusalem; and they suffered a grievous persecution from him.—All these facts are confirmed by Jewish and heathen historians of undoubted credit; and the book of Maccabees very much illustrates this part of the chapter.

## CHAP. XI. 31, to the end.

In the interpretation of the former part of this chapter commentators are generally agreed, and history answers to it most exactly. In what is now before us, they widely differ: most of them apply it entirely to Antiochus Epiphanes; though there are some things plainly foretold of antichrist, and which can by no means be applied to Antiochus; but it appears to me that this prophecy relates to the principal events concerning the christian church to the end of time.

31 **AND** arms shall stand on his part, *or, after him the Romans shall stand up*, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily [sacrifice,] and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate: *accordingly, they conquered the Greeks, reduced Syria and Egypt to provinces of their empire, and at length Judea; this passage the Jews themselves understood of the Romans.* 32 And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall be corrupt by flatteries: but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do [exploits;] *the christian church having succeeded to the jewish, the Romans by flattery and threatenings shall endeavour to corrupt the christians, and many (as in the margin of our bibles) shall they 'cause to dissemble;' but true christians shall continue firm, and be eminent examples of patience and courage.* 33 And they that understand among the people shall instruct many; *referring to the progress of the gospel, and the many proselytes that were made to it: yet they shall fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, [many] days; for near three hundred years they will suffer grievous hardships, and ten general persecutions.* 34 Now when they shall fall, they shall be holpen with a little help\*: but many shall cleave to them with flatteries; *shall become christians, because christianity shall be the religion of the emperor and the empire: this help lasted but a little while.* 35 And [some] of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make [them] white, [even] to the time of the end: because [it is] yet for a time appointed; *the spirit of persecution shall revive; christians shall quarrel with and persecute*

\* This is a prophecy of Constantine the Great, the first christian emperor, who favoured and protected the church. It is called a *little help*, because, though it added to the external prosperity, yet it was a means of corrupting the doctrines and discipline of the church, and of weakening the graces of christians.



one another; and the best suffer most: and this persecution shall, in a greater or lesser degree, continue long; as it does to this day.—The principal source of these persecutions follow.

36 And the king, or a king, shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods; a plain prophecy of the establishment of popery; and St. Paul uses much the same phrases to describe it in 2 Thess. ii. 4., that is, after the empire shall become christian, an antichristian power shall spring up in it, that shall act in the most arbitrary manner, and exalt itself above all laws human and divine; and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished, that is, till the end of God's indignation against the Jews: for that that is determined shall be done.

37 Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers; that is, the pope and his followers shall not worship the heathen gods of their ancestors; or rather, it may refer to their changing the christian worship; nor the desire of women, forbidding marriage to the clergy and monks, and discouraging it in others, nor regard any god: for he shall magnify himself above all, and behave in the most impious manner. 38 But in his estate shall he honour the God of forces; establish the worship of Mauzzim, or, protectors; he shall establish the worship of saints and angels, as protectors and guardians of mankind; and a god whom his fathers knew not shall he honour with gold, and silver, and with precious stones, and pleasant things; his altars and images shall be adorned in the most costly manner. 39 Thus shall he do in the most strong holds with a strange god, whom he shall acknowledge [and] increase with glory: and he shall cause them to rule over many, and shall divide the land for gain; to the defenders of these protectors or gods, he shall multiply honours; that is, the priests and monks, the defenders of the worship of tutelary saints, shall be enriched, and have power over the purses and consciences of men. Such shall be the degeneracy of the christian church.—The punishment of it, especially in the eastern parts, then follows.

40 And at the time of the end shall the king of the south push at him: and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over\*. 41 He shall enter also into the glorious land, and many

\* The kingdoms of Egypt and Syria had been swallowed up by the Roman empire; therefore they were no longer kings of the north and of the south; but at the time of the end, or, in the latter days of the Roman empire, the king of the

[countries] shall be overthrown\*: but these shall escape out of his hand, [even] Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon; *referring to the Arabians, whom the Turks never could subdue; but are obliged to pay them an annual tribute for the safety of their caravans.* 42 He shall stretch forth his hand also upon the countries: and the land of Egypt shall not escape; *the Turks shall conquer Egypt.* 43 But he shall have power over the treasures, *they took vast treasures there, and still reign over it,* of gold and of silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt: and the Libyans and the Ethiopians [shall be] at his steps; *the northern parts of Africa shall submit to them. Accordingly, they are now under their dominion, or tributary to them.—The next verses refer to events which are yet to come.* 44 But tidings out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him: therefore he shall go forth with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away many. 45 And he shall plant the tabernacles of his palaces between the seas in the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him †.

## REFLECTIONS.

1. FROM the thirty-second verse we are taught, that the right knowledge of God gives strength and courage to the soul. Minds well principled in the knowledge and fear of God, will neither be terrified by threatenings, or seduced by flatteries, to act wickedly against the christian covenant. They will bravely suffer persecution, and overcome temptation, as the martyrs have done; and endure any thing, rather than make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience. Let us then study the knowledge of God and the design of the christian covenant, that we may be steadfast and firm to our duty.

south, that is, the Saracens, who came from Arabia, south of Judea, under Mahomet and his successors, pushed at the eastern empire; and the king of the north, that is, the Turks, after the Saracens had weakened it, totally ruined and destroyed it. Chariots and horsemen are mentioned, as they were famous for their cavalry; they first overflowed the western parts of Asia, and then came over to Europe to Constantinople, and fixed the seat of their empire there.

\* The Turks took possession of Judea, and could never yet be driven out of it; and many neighbouring countries submitted to them.

† Perhaps *the east* may refer to the Persians, and *the north* to the Russians, who are formidable neighbours to the Turks, and may at length be the instruments of Providence in destroying the Ottoman power, and restoring the Jews to their own land. Or it may refer to the return of the Jews from those countries where most of them are scattered. The Turks may then come against them into the holy land, with all their power, and there be remarkably destroyed.

2. We are shown the design of afflictions and persecutions. It may seem strange that Providence should suffer persecution to rise and reign, as it did in the time here referred to, for three hundred years; and, under popish usurpation, ever since. But it has been permitted, as v. 35., to exercise the graces of the sufferers, to purge out their corruptions, and establish pure religion. And this is the design of our private afflictions, even to promote our purity, humility, seriousness, and zeal. The men of understanding and true goodness suffer as well as others; but *it is all for their profit, and to produce the peaceable fruits of righteousness.*

3. Though God suffers proud and tyrannical oppressors and persecutors to prosper long, yet at length he will punish and destroy them. This is often repeated in this prophecy; *the end shall come; there is a time appointed; the indignation shall be accomplished;* and the like. Cruel oppressors shall come to their end; and none shall effectually help them. We see in all this, God's care of his church and people; and should look forward by faith to the end of tyranny and persecution, which this sure word of prophecy leads us to expect. *Be patient therefore, brethren, till the coming of the Lord: for God will render tribulation to them that trouble his people, and to them that are troubled, everlasting rest.*

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## CHAPTER XII.

In the former chapter we had a prophecy of a wonderful series of events, particularly relating to the Jews and the eastern empire; here we have an account of the restoration of the Jews, and the consummation of all things.

1 **AND** at that time, *after the Turkish empire shall be destroyed,* shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation [even] to that same time; *the prophets, and Christ, and the apostle John in the Revelations, all represent the time of the conversion of the Jews as a time of great trouble and commotion:* and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book; *alluding to the names of citizens and freemen being registered in a book.*  
 2 And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall

awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame [and] everlasting contempt; *no doubt referring to the general resurrection: many, signifies the whole species; as Rom. v. 15., by the offence of one, many, that is, the many, or all, were dead.* 3 And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever; *all good men shall be happy in the future state; but there shall be different degrees of happiness, in proportion to their different attainments, and their services to God and the church.* 4 But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words and seal the book, [even] to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased; *that is, this vision refers to future and distant events, and therefore it is not to be fully known till the events discover it. In the mean time, these prophecies will set persons upon inquiring, and many important discoveries will be made, even to the end of time.*

5 Then I Daniel looked, and, behold, there stood other two angels attending the *Shekinah*, the one on this side of the bank of the river, and the other on that side of the bank of the river. 6 And [one] said to the man clothed in linen, which [was] upon the waters of the river, (*probably to Christ, to satisfy Daniel's curiosity, who durst not ask*), How long [shall it be to] the end of these wonders? 7 And I heard the man clothed in linen, which [was] upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and swore by him that liveth for ever [that it shall be] for a time, times and an half; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these [things] shall be finished; *he solemnly swore that it should be three years and a half, that is, so many years as there are days in three years and a half, which is a period equal to twelve hundred and sixty years, when the dispersion of the Jews shall be ended, and they shall be restored to God and their own land.* 8 And I heard, but I understood not: Then said I, O my Lord, what [shall be] the end of these [things?]  
*I wish and pray for a clearer discovery, when the time so obscurely expressed shall begin and end.* 9 And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words [are] closed up and sealed till the time of the end; *it must not be expected that they should be clearly understood until they are accomplished.* 10 Many shall be purified, and made white and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand; *good men during this period must expect sharp trials; which will purify their souls; but the wicked shall be given up to blindness and obstinacy, because they would do wickedly, and*

*shall have nothing to support them under these trials.* 11 And from the time [that] the daily [sacrifice] shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, [there shall be] a thousand two hundred and ninety days. 12 Blessed [is] he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days\*. *The angel concludes with a comfortable word to Daniel.* 13 But go thou thy way till the end [be:] for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days; or, *thou shalt come to thy end; that is, thou shalt die long before these things come to pass, or are understood, and shall rest in thy grave, and not be afflicted with the distresses here mentioned, and shalt receive a full reward at the resurrection of the just.*

## REFLECTIONS.

1. UPON the whole, we may exclaim with Bp. Newton, ‘What an amazing prophecy is this!’ comprehending so many various events, and extending through so many successive ages; even from the first foundation of the Persian empire, (five hundred and thirty years before Christ,) to the general resurrection: and the farther it extends, and the more it comprehends, and the better it is understood, the more amazing surely, and the more divine, it must appear. What stronger and more convincing proofs can be given or required, of a divine Providence and a divine revelation?

2. Let us, in the faith of this prophecy, expect the resurrection of the dead. Some modern divines have attempted to prove that there is no resurrection of the body, but only of the soul to a new life: but this prophecy, as well as many passages in the New Testament, prove a resurrection of the body. What else can be meant by *many that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake?*

\* In this passage three remarkable periods are pointed out: twelve hundred and sixty, twelve hundred and ninety, and thirteen hundred and thirty-five. What they refer to is very uncertain, and can only be conjectured. The daily sacrifice being taken away, cannot here refer to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans; therefore many understand it of the Saracens’ conquering Jerusalem, and turning the christian churches in the east into mosques; and some, by the daily sacrifice, understand the Lord’s supper.—It is remarkable, that the imposture of Mahomet, and the tyranny of popery, began at the same time; and it seems here to be intimated, that both shall fall nearly together. The first period of twelve hundred and sixty years, may perhaps refer to the fall of the Mahometan power: thirty years after, the Jews are to be fully restored and settled in their own land: and about forty years after that, there is to be a glorious time, when the fullness of the Gentiles is to be brought in, and the happy state of the church for one thousand years to begin.—But the words are shut up; the vision is sealed; and therefore I shall say no more of it.

And oh, let us think seriously how they will arise; some, who while here were past remorse, and gloried in their shame, shall awake; when their guilt shall be brought to light, convicted and confounded, shame shall return upon them double, and they shall be objects of scorn and contempt to the whole world. Good men shall arise to everlasting life; and they shall have peculiar honour who have turned many to righteousness. The more they do here, the more glory shall they have hereafter. This is great encouragement to parents and ministers to be diligent in their respective duties to the souls committed to them; and may we all so behave here, that we may attain to the resurrection of the dead, and of them that sleep in Jesus!

3. A diligent inquiry into the meaning of the scripture, with a humble, teachable spirit, will be attended with success. The labours of learned men have cleared up many difficulties in scripture. We better understand the prophecies than our fathers, and our posterity will understand them better than we. They grow clearer the nearer they come to their accomplishment. Let this excite us to take pains in the study of the scriptures. But remember, we must come to the work with upright and pure hearts. The wise shall understand, but not the wicked; their lusts and passions prejudice them both against truth and duty. But he that will diligently search after the will of God, and is determined to do it, *shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God; shall understand the scriptures, and be made wise to salvation.*

4. What a comfort is it to good men, that there is a rest remaining for them, and a happy lot in a future world. Blessed be God, this is plain, amidst all the obscurities of prophecy, that good men when they die, *enter into peace, rest from their labours and sorrows; and that there is a world of perfect light and happiness before them.* Let it be our ambition to have our lot among God's saints, and our everlasting portion with his chosen. *Here we know but in part, and see through a glass darkly; but when that which is perfect is come, that which is only in part shall be done away.*

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# DANIEL'S WEEKS;

OR,

PROPHECY OF THE MESSIAH'S APPEARANCE.

A DISCOURSE FROM DANIEL IX. 24—27.

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## DANIEL IX. 24—27.

Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sin, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.

**I**T is very observable, that when our blessed Lord quotes part of our text, Matt. xxiv. 15., he demands particular attention to it. *When, says he, ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)* as if he had said, When you read that prophecy, attend to it, study it carefully, and be very solicitous to understand it; for it is a passage of great importance, containing such a prediction of the time, the purposes and consequences of the coming and death of the Messiah, his rejection by the Jews, and the

destruction of their temple, city, and nation, as cannot be equalled in the Old Testament. Let him that readeth, understand; which he will not do, without close attention, and serious reflection. And may God open our understandings, that we may understand this scripture, and learn our duty from it.

I shall, first, illustrate the remarkable events here foretold;

Secondly, the time when they should happen;

And then, draw some inferences from the whole.—I am

I. To illustrate the events here foretold:

And here we must consider, the person spoken of; what he was to do; what he was to suffer; and the consequences of both, with regard to those that received, and those that rejected him.

1. The person spoken of.

And that is, undoubtedly, the Lord Jesus Christ; who is here styled *Messiah*; which signifies, the anointed one, or, the Christ. By this name the Jews expected him. *Is not this the Christ? we know that Christ cometh.* There is no accounting for the prevalence of this title among them, but from our text, and some other passages, where he is spoken of as anointed. Andrew says to Peter\*, *We have found the Messiah*, which is, being interpreted, the Christ.—He was to be, as our text expresseth it, anointed; *to anoint the most Holy*. As priests and kings were anointed under the law, to invest them with their respective offices; so Christ was anointed with the holy Spirit; filled with his gifts and graces; and thus consecrated to God, and qualified for the great work he had to perform.—He is also called *the Prince*, ruler, or leader, as the word is differently translated: as he was to be king of the Jews, a leader and commander of all his people, and the captain of our salvation.—He is also styled *the most Holy*. His original was unspotted, his life most holy, being entirely devoted to the service and glory of God, and the salvation of mankind. He was the most holy person that ever lived upon earth, and the brightest image of Him, who is glorious and perfect in holiness.

2. What he was to do.

And we shall find, that his business was purely spiritual; and had the Jews attended to this prophecy, they would not have entertained such carnal notions of their Messiah, as a temporal victorious prince. He was *to finish transgression, and make an end of sin*. Which may signify, to put an end to all sacrifices in the

\* John i. 41.



Jewish temple; to set aside the institution and rites of the law; and to introduce a new dispensation. The expression, *finish transgression*, is better rendered in the margin, to *restrain transgression, and make an end of sin*, to seal up sin. And so it intimates, that he was to set up a kingdom of truth and holiness in the world; to introduce a better state of religion than before; to proclaim pardon and peace to a guilty world; to seal up sin, that it might not rise up in judgment to condemn the guilty; that is, he was to be manifested to take away sin, and to deliver men from its power and dominion, by his word and Spirit.—Further, he was to seal up the vision and prophecy; that is, fully to accomplish the visions and predictions of the prophets in foregoing ages: as when a letter or writing is sealed, it is supposed to be finished, and the whole transaction completed. Thus Christ was to show that all things written in the law, the prophets and the psalms, were fulfilled in him. And the expression may further intimate, that he was to put an end to that method of divine revelation. He was to give the church a written rule of truth and duty; and there was to be no more visions and prophecies. All pretences to these, after the establishment of his gospel, would and must, therefore, be impostures.—It is here foretold,

3. What the Messiah was to suffer.

He was to be cut off, but not for himself: or, as the prophet Isaiah expresseth it, to be cut off out of the land of the living: that is, to be put to death as a malefactor: for the word signifies a punishment inflicted by the sentence of a judge, or court of judicature. Accordingly, he was crucified, after a formal trial, as a blasphemer of God, his law, and temple, and as an enemy to Cæsar. But it was not for himself; being perfectly innocent, even, as our text calls him, *the most Holy*; he was not subject to the law of mortality; and the accusations laid against him, at his trial, were false; but he was cut off for the sins of men; suffered the just for the unjust; for the transgressions of God's people was he stricken; to purchase pardon, peace, and eternal life, for all them that believe.—But this leads me to consider,

4. The consequences of his sufferings;

Both with regard to his friends and enemies; those who received, and those who rejected, him.

First, with regard to his friends and disciples, those who sincerely received him, and believed in him. It was to make reconciliation for iniquity, v. 24. The word signifies, to make expiation by sacrifice; and refers to his offering up himself a sacrifice

for sin; not only to proclaim peace and reconciliation, but to make way for it by his own sacrifice. The several expressions of *transgression, sin, iniquity*, which are here used, may denote the extent and efficacy of his sacrifice; that it reaches to all sins, takes away the guilt and punishment of offences of every kind and degree.—Further, he was to *bring in everlasting righteousness*. He was not only to give the best rules for promoting true and inward righteousness, but to establish a method of justification, or of our being accepted of God, as righteous persons; and it is an everlasting righteousness; there is an everlasting virtue in his atonement; and those who are justified by his righteousness, shall never come into condemnation, but are the heirs of eternal life.—Further, he was to *confirm the covenant with many, v. 27*. He was to introduce and publish a new dispensation, or covenant of mercy, and to confirm the promise of it with his own blood. His doctrine, miracles, death, resurrection, and the institutions of his religion, baptism and the Lord's supper, are all confirmations or seals of the covenant of grace. And he was to confirm it with many, or, with the many. It was not to be confined, like the first covenant, to the Jews, but to extend to all mankind. He was given for a covenant to the people; and therefore he is called the Mediator, or surety, of it: and the great promise of this covenant is eternal life. These were the happy effects of his sufferings with regard to his friends, even to all that believe.—Again;

The text foretells the consequences of them to his enemies, and those that rejected him; more especially the Jews, here called, Daniel's people, and the holy city. Now of them it is foretold, that *they shall be rejected*. The phrase here translated, *but not for himself*, some good critics would render, *and they*, that is, the Jews, *shall be no more his*, that is, his people. It is foretold that war should rise against them, *v. 26*. That the Romans should come upon them, *and the people of the prince that shall come*; by which some understand, the people of a future prince, one not yet in being; a monarchy that is hereafter to rise up; though I think it signifies Christ's people; those whom he shall employ as the executioners of his vengeance upon his enemies. The words are literally, *the prince's future people*; which has led some to suppose, that it signifies that the nation of the Romans should afterwards become Christ's people; and indeed the principal success of christianity at first was in the Roman empire. However, all agree, that by this people, was meant the Romans;

and the event confirmed it. It is foretold, that they should attack Jerusalem, *the holy city, and the sanctuary, and destroy both.* And this also was fulfilled in the event; for, after a long siege, in which the Jews suffered greater hardships than any people ever endured, the city was taken and destroyed. Titus, the Roman general, would fain have saved the temple; but the Roman soldiers, out of resentment to the Jews, burned it. Afterwards, the ground was ploughed up, and, as our Lord foretold, not one stone was left upon another. In consequence of this, the sacrifice and oblation were made to cease. Indeed the doctrine and death of the Messiah abolished them, as to their authority and efficacy: but when the temple was destroyed, they could no longer be offered. And it is here added, *v. 27., for, or, by, the overspreading of abominations, he shall make it desolate; which may be rendered, and upon the battlements shall be the abomination, that is, the death of the desolator.* So our Lord, *Matt. xxiv. 15., mentions the abominations of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, as standing in the holy place.* The Roman standards were set upon the walls of Jerusalem; on which standards they had idols, to which they offered sacrifices; and these caused desolation wherever they came. It is further said in the text, *the end thereof,* that is, of the city and temple, *shall be with a flood;* that is, the Romans shall spread like a flood over the whole land; nothing shall be able to stand against them. *Desolations are determined to the end of the war, even till the consummation;* that is, the whole land should be made desolate by the war; wrath should come upon those people to the uttermost, and they should be made more desolate than any other nation ever was. And the concluding words of the text intimate that something determined, more than all this, should be poured out on the desolate, even a spirit of blindness and slumber. But others think that the clause should be rendered, *until the consummation, and that determined be poured upon the desolate;* that is, till what succeeds to the ancient Roman power, even the church of Rome, be destroyed, and the Jews be restored. It intimates, however, that Jerusalem and Judea should continue long desolate; accordingly, our Lord foretold, *Luke xxi. 24., Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.*

II. I am to illustrate the time when these events should happen.

And this deserves particular attention. It may be necessary to premise something concerning the nature of the measure of time

here specified; the period from whence it commences; and the particular division of the time mentioned. As to the first; what we read of *weeks*, refers to *weeks of years*, or, so many times of years. This is agreeable to the language of the Old Testament, and especially the language of prophecy. The law said, *thou shalt number seven sabbaths* or *weeks of years*, that is, forty-nine years, to the jubile; and this prophet distinguished between common weeks and weeks of years, (see *Dan. x. 2.*), *I was mourning three full weeks*, the original is, *weeks of days*; so that a week is here put for seven years; and seventy weeks for seven times seventy years, that is, four hundred and ninety. This is to comprehend the whole period between the going forth of the commandment to restore Jerusalem, and the death of Christ; and the commandment here referred to, is the commandment or grant to Ezra for restoring the church and state of the Jews; for that, I think, is meant by the expression of *restoring* and *building Jerusalem*; settling the affairs of the nation, and restoring their ancient constitution and polity. For this, the command was granted to Ezra, by Artaxerxes king of Persia, in the seventh year of his reign: and from that time to the death of Christ, was exactly four hundred and ninety years, to a month. But this whole period is afterwards divided into three; or seven weeks, sixty-two weeks, and one week. From this decree to Messiah the prince, that is, to the first publication of his gospel, should be seven weeks, and sixty-two weeks. In the first seven weeks, that is, forty-nine years, the street should be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times, that is, the Jewish church and state, here figuratively expressed by the street and wall or ditch of the city, should be thoroughly reformed and restored; and this, amidst great opposition from enemies; as we read was the case. Now, from the beginning of this restoration by Ezra, to the ending and perfecting of it by Nehemiah, was exactly forty-nine years. The second period was from the end of this seven weeks, or forty-nine years, to the end of sixty-two weeks, or four hundred and thirty-four years; and then Messiah the prince was to appear, that is, his gospel was to be opened upon the world. Accordingly, John the Baptist, his forerunner, then began to preach the kingdom of heaven. The law and the prophets were till John; and he began to preach just sixty-nine weeks after Ezra's decree, that is, four hundred and eighty-three years. John the Baptist preached three years and a half, then the Messiah himself preached three years and a half more; and these two put together make seven years; the last week of the prophecy.

This is the third period. In this week, or seven years, the covenant was to be confirmed with many: and *in the midst thereof*, as we render it, but it should be translated, *in the half part thereof*, the latter half, *he shall cause the sacrifice to cease*. He confirmed the covenant by preaching the gospel; and at the close of the last week, put an end to sacrifices for sin by the sacrifice of himself. Indeed it is said, *v. 26., after sixty-two weeks shall Messiah be cut off*; but the word *after* must refer to the whole next week, otherwise, no time would be left for his ministry. And, in *v. 24.*, the events to be brought to pass by his death are placed at the end of the seventy weeks.

Upon the whole, then, the first period of forty-nine years, refers to restoring the church and state of the Jews; the second, sixty-two weeks, reaches from the end of that period to the publication of the gospel; and the last week, from John's preaching to Christ's being cut off, which was one week, or seven years. All these put together, make up the seventy weeks, or four hundred and ninety years. And, according to this computation, every particular hath been exactly verified, and the whole number of years answers to a month. Other computations have been made by learned men; but this appears to me the most exact and satisfactory; and every reasonable objection against it has been fully removed by Dr. Prideaux. There are difficulties attending every computation, arising from the different names, number, and years, of the Persian kings; and the different lengths of years in different nations. But it is by no means necessary that the time in the prediction should be precisely computed; since in all the computations of learned men, the time of the appearance of Jesus, as the Messiah, falls in sufficiently with it. After this period was accomplished, the Jewish capital, temple, and nation, were to be destroyed.

### APPLICATION.

1. HERE is a glorious evidence of the truth of this prophecy, and of christianity.

Indeed this is a reflection which might have been mentioned after any of the prophecies; but it deserves particular regard here; as this is the largest and most precise of any, both as to the events and the time. It is so remarkable a prophecy, that some of the enemies of christianity had no other answer to make to it, than 'that it was forged after the events happened.' But many

learned men have proved that notion to be highly absurd; and our Lord's quoting the prophecy, is a sufficient proof to us that it is genuine. To which I may add, what Josephus, the Jewish historian, who saw the latter part of it fulfilled, says, viz., that Daniel prophesied of that desolation, and fixed a time for it. All the computations of the learned agree within a few years; and there are no events to which this passage can refer but those we have mentioned. False prophets and impostors talk of things in a general strain. Our almanack-makers, and such idle, wicked pretenders, speak of war, peace, mortality, commotions, &c., in general terms. But here are various particulars, and great, wonderful, unusual events: that a holy, glorious person should be cut off; a whole nation be ruined; their capital destroyed; be long desolate; and the like: and here a precise time is fixed for these events. Could it be by chance or sagacity, or a lucky conjecture, that Daniel foretold all this, and just hit the time? No: it is impossible. We can ascribe this discovery to that God alone, whose understanding is infinite, and penetrates through all futurity. It is a good remark of Josephus above-mentioned, that God revealed these things to Daniel, and he delivered them in writing, that posterity, comparing the events with the prediction, might know that Jehovah is not like the gods of the heathen, but governs all human affairs. Let this confirm our faith in the gospel: and let us diligently study the prophecies, especially this; remembering our Lord's command concerning it, *Let him that readeth understand.*

2. How inexcusable are the Jews in their infidelity.

One of their celebrated rabbies, who lived about fifty years before Christ, declared, 'that the time fixed by Daniel for the coming of the Messiah, could not exceed fifty years from that time.' It plainly appears, that, at the time of Christ's coming, the whole Jewish nation expected the Messiah, and thought the kingdom of God was immediately to appear; and their expectation was principally grounded on this prophecy. There were many false Christs about that time, and since, but none before. During the whole siege of Jerusalem they hoped for deliverance, upon the authority of this prophecy; mistaking the Messiah for a temporal prince: and Josephus thought the Roman emperor Vespasian was the Messiah, at least he complimented him with the title. But now the Jews are got quite beyond their reckoning, and are puzzled to account for it, why the Messiah does not appear. Some of them allow, that these weeks closed before the destruction of Jerusalem, but that the Messiah's coming was

deferred by reason of the sins of the nation ; but this is a wretched shift. In the last century there was a public dispute at Venice, between a Jew and a convert from judaism, concerning the sense of this prophecy. A noted rabbi was chosen moderator, and a great many Jews were present. The christian urged his arguments against the Jews with so much force, that at length the rabbi said, ' Let us shut up our books ; for, if we go on examining this prophecy any farther, we shall all become christians. It cannot be denied,' added he, ' that the time of the Messiah's coming is already past ; but whether Jesus of Nazareth be the person, I cannot determine.' The consequence of this was, that several Jews were converted ; and one of them, a very learned man, who wrote a large book against the Jews, in the preface to which he tells this story, as the means of his conversion. How lamentable is the case of this unhappy nation, who shut their eyes against the clearest evidence, and look for another Messiah, so many hundred years after the time fixed by their own prophets. Let us think of their blindness and obstinacy with pity ; and earnestly pray that the Redeemer *may come unto Sion, and turn away ungodliness from Jacob ; and that all Israel may at length be saved.* Once more,

3. Let us rejoice in the design of the Messiah's coming, and heartily fall in with it.

While he is to the Jews a stumbling-block, let him be precious to our souls. We have here another proof of the importance of the christian scheme, in that it was introduced by such a particular and circumstantial prophecy as this. May I not add, we see also the importance of the peculiar doctrines of the gospel, especially the atonement of Christ, and justification by his righteousness ; for they are the ends of his coming particularly specified in this prediction. He is here represented as something more than a teacher, and an example of righteousness, more than a martyr for truth ; he is described as *making reconciliation for iniquity, and bringing in everlasting righteousness.* If we therefore desire the pardon of our iniquities, and acceptance with God, we must seek it in this way ; believing and trusting in Christ, and depending upon his merits and righteousness. Think of the calamities which came upon the Jews for rejecting Christ, and the curse under which they continue to this day : and from thence judge, how dreadful their case must be who reject Christ now, after they have this and so many additional evidences, that *he is the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world.* While we condemnu

the Jews, let us take care that we do not condemn ourselves. We indeed profess his name; but if we will not come to him for life, if we will not consent to be saved by him in his own way, we are *the despisers of Christ*. Every wicked christian *crucifies him afresh, and puts him to open shame*; and the desolation that is determined against all the wicked, shall be poured out with double fury upon his head. On the other hand, every true believer has reason to rejoice in this Saviour; to triumph in the effectual reconciliation which he has made for iniquity, and the everlasting righteousness which he has brought in. *For, as the apostle argues, Rom. v. 10., if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.*

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THE BOOK OF  
THE PROPHET HOSEA.

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INTRODUCTION.

HOSEA is the first in order of the twelve minor prophets; so called, not because they are of less authority or use, but of smaller bulk, than the others. He exercised his office in the kingdom of Israel much about the same time in which Isaiah exercised his in the kingdom of Judah; that is, about seven hundred and eighty-five years before Christ to seven hundred and twenty-five. His prophecies are chiefly directed to the ten tribes before their captivity; whom, as a body, he reproveth and threatens; and then comforts the pious among them with the promise of the Messiah, and the happy state of the church in the latter days. His style is very short, and therefore often obscure.

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CHAPTER I.

Hosea, to shew God's judgment for spiritual whoredom, taketh Gomer, and hath by her Jezreel, &c.

1 **THE** word of the LORD that came unto Hosea, the son of Beeri, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, [and] Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel. *He prophesied a long time concerning the destruction of Israel, or the ten tribes, and he lived to see it.*

2 The beginning of the word of the LORD by Hosea. And the LORD said to Hosea, Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms: for the land hath committed great whoredom, [departing] from the LORD: *a visionary representation, or, a kind of parable, to impress it more strongly on the minds of the people. A woman proving false to her husband, was a lively representation of the infidelity and idolatry of Israel, and God's resentment of it.* 3 So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim; which conceived, and bare him a son. 4 And the LORD

said unto him, Call his name Jezreel, *which signifies the arm of the Lord, or, his seed; to intimate, that the arm of the Lord was stretched out to punish this people: for yet a little [while,] and I will avenge, or visit, the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, the blood of Ahab's family, which Jehu slew in Jezreel, (2 Kings, x.), and will cause to cease the kingdom of the house of Israel.* 5 And it shall come to pass at that day, that I will break the bow, or strength, of Israel in the valley of Jezreel, *by the Assyrians who shall overcome them there.*

6 And she conceived again, and bare a daughter. And [God] said unto him, Call her name Lo-ruhamah, *that is, not having obtained mercy: for I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel; but I will utterly take them away; referring to the invasion of Tiglath-Pileser, who carried many of them captive.* 7 But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them by the LORD their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen; *salvation shall be wrought out for Judah by the immediate hand of God; probably referring to the deliverance of Hezekiah king of Judah, and the destruction of the vast Assyrian army in one night.* 8 Now when she had weaned Lo-ruhamah, she conceived, and bare a son. 9 Then said [God,] Call his name Lo-ammi, *that is, not my people: for ye [are] not my people, and I will not be your [God;] referring to the rejection of the ten tribes, who were all carried captive by Shalmaneser king of Assyria, when the covenant relation between God and them was dissolved.*

10 Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass, [that] in the place where it was said unto them, Ye [are] not my people, [there] it shall be said unto them, [Ye are] the sons of the living God; *they shall not be swallowed up and lost, but continue distinct and numerous, and shall again become the people of God\*.* 11 Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together, and appoint themselves one head, *that is, the Messiah,* and they shall come up out of the land, or countries where they were dispersed: for great [shall be] the day of Jezreel; *the arm of God shall be remarkably revealed to accomplish the great event of their conversion by the gospel.*

\* This is applied by St. Paul (Rom. ix. 26.) to the conversion of the Gentiles, but not to the exclusion of the Israelites.

## REFLECTIONS.

1. SEE here the necessity of having right views and intentions in any service we undertake for God. The case of Jehu leads to this important remark. God commanded him to destroy the house of Ahab, and he did it; yet here the blood of that house is threatened to be avenged upon Jehu's house; because he did it not in obedience to God, but to gratify his own ambition and cruelty; and still retained the idolatry of the house of Ahab; for which idolatry it was that God had commanded them to be destroyed. Let us look well to our principles, views, and ends; or God may condemn us for what we think an act of obedience, and suppose will be pleasing to him.

2. See the evil of sin, and the dreadful effects of God's displeasure against it. It turned away his mercy from Israel, of which they had long been partakers; and the consequence of this was their utter destruction. All our hopes should be founded on divine mercy; but allowed sin will deprive us of it. If men do wickedly, whatever they may hope, *He that made them will not have mercy upon them, and he that formed them will show them no favour.*

3. See the nature of the christian covenant, and our duty and privileges under it. It is much the same as the Jewish. If we deliberately and sincerely choose the Lord for our God, he will own and treat us as his people; we shall be the children of the living God. But if we desert his service, and prove false to our covenant engagements, the relation is dissolved; he will disown and condemn us. *Be ye therefore ever mindful of his covenant.*

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## CHAPTER II.

The first verse, in which they are ordered to congratulate one another in the happy change in their state, and their restoration to the divine favour, should have been added to the former chapter.

1 **SAY** ye unto your brethren Ammi, *that is, my people*; and to your sisters, Ruhamah, *that is, having obtained mercy*. 2 Plead with your mother, plead: for she [is] not my wife, neither [am] I her husband: let her therefore put away her whoredoms out of her sight, and her adulteries from between her breasts; *O ye pious Israelites, attempt the reformation of your country, and engage them to put away their idols, and their alliances with idolaters*: 3 Lest I strip her naked, and set her as in the day that she was born, and make her as a wilderness, and set her like a dry land, and slay her with thirst; *lest, as a husband turns out an adulterous wife, so I should strip them of their wealth and ornaments, and send them into captivity*. 4 And I will not have mercy upon her children; for they [be] the children of whoredoms; *I will leave them in the power of their enemies*. 5 For their mother hath played the harlot: she that conceived them hath done shamefully: for she said, I will go after my lovers, that give [me] my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink; *they ascribe their prosperity to their idols, and, because of that, go on in idolatry*. 6 Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and, *if that will not do, I will make a wall, that she shall not find her paths; I will bring great calamities upon them, so that they shall not know which way to turn themselves*. 7 And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find [them;] *they shall seek help from their idols and allies, but in vain*: then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband; for then [was it] better with me than now; *they shall afterwards repent and return to God*. 8 For she did not know, *did not consider*, that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, [which] they prepared for Baal, *or wherewith they made Baal*. 9 Therefore will I return, and take away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof, *when they are just about to gather it in, so that the disappointment shall be peculiarly mortifying*,

and will recover, *or, take away*, my wool and my flax [given] to cover her nakedness. 10 And now will I discover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, and none shall deliver her out of mine hand; *her wickedness shall be discovered by its punishment.* 11 I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feast days, her new moons, and her sabbaths, and all her solemn feasts; *she hath kept up these amidst her idolatry, for the sake of company and feasting: but they shall have no opportunity for doing this when they are carried captive.* 12 And I will destroy her vines and her fig trees, whereof she hath said, These [are] my rewards that my lovers have given me: and I will make them a forest, and the beasts of the field shall eat them; *all the country shall be desolate.* 13 And I will visit upon her the days of Baalim, *I will punish her for all her idolatries, wherein she burned incense to them, to different sorts of Baals, (different idols being worshipped under the name of Baal, as Baal-berith, Baal-zebub, Baal-peor\*;) and she decked herself with her earrings and her jewels, and she went after her lovers, and forgot me, saith the LORD; this was the root of all, even forgetfulness of God.*

14 Therefore, *or, notwithstanding this*, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, *or, after, I have brought her into the wilderness, (an allusion to Israel's being led through the wilderness to Canaan,)* and speak comfortably unto her; *speaking to her heart, like an affectionate husband, who uses many arguments to persuade a perverse wife to return to her duty, and to cultivate a better temper.* 15 And I will give her vineyards from thence, *at that time her vineyards shall be restored, and the valley of Achor, a fruitful valley, that lay to the north of Jericho, for a door of hope, as an earnest of future blessings: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt; when the accursed thing was done away, then the Israelites felt no more tokens of the divine displeasure, but went on joyfully, conquering the land; so shall they, when brought to repentance, enter on the possession of their hopes, and all good things shall be before them.* 16 And it shall be at that day, saith the LORD, [that] thou shalt call me Ishi, *that is, my husband;* and shalt call me no more Baali, *that is, my lord;* *whereas she was before divorced, she shall now be received again as a wife.* 17 For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name,

\* Bp. Newcome.

*through disuse and detestation, because it was also the name of false gods; that is, they shall scrupulously avoid idolatry.* 18 And in that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and [with] the creeping things of the ground: and I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely; *I will guard them from every injury and every evil.* 19 And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving kindness, and in mercies; *the marriage covenant being renewed, I will do, not only what is just and right, but whatever is kind and affectionate.* 20 I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness; *I will enter into a more durable, indissoluble engagement than ever:* and thou shalt know the LORD; *continue obedient to God and his gospel, and largely experience his goodness.* 21 And it shall come to pass in that day I will hear, saith the LORD, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; 22 And the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel. *Jezreel, that is, the seed of the Lord, (put for Israel, who shall be numerous as the seeds of the field,) shall call on the corn, wine, and oil; they shall call upon the earth to nourish and produce them; the earth shall call on the heavens for showers and sunshine, and the heavens shall call on God to give them: all second causes shall concur for their welfare, and all depend upon God.* 23 And I will sow her unto me in the earth; *as I have multiplied her corn, so they, who are the seed of the Lord, shall bring forth abundantly;* and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to [them which were] not my people, Thou [art] my people; and they shall say, [Thou art] my God; *an allusion to the names of the children in the former chapter; and the whole refers to the conversion of the Jews in the latter day.*

## REFLECTIONS.

1. LET us acknowledge the hand of God in the blessings and comforts of life, both temporal and spiritual. They all come from him: he gives us our corn, our wine, and our oil; no second causes, not labour, nor diligence, nor friends are sufficient, without him. Let us give him the praise of them, and use them for his glory. When men are insensible of his hand, encourage them-

selves in sin, by their prosperity, and abuse it to luxury and intemperance, he can and will take them away; for they are his still, we are only stewards. And we are indebted to him for our domestic peace, for sabbaths and ordinances; and he may punish abused sabbaths and neglected ordinances, by causing them to cease, and making our souls a desolate wilderness.

2. See the wise designs of God in afflicting his people. When men grow forgetful of him, of his nature and attributes, of their dependance upon him and obligations to him, which is the source of all evil; it is kind in him to correct them, to hedge up their ways, to bring perplexity and distress upon them, and to disappoint all their expectations from creatures. His design is, to bring them to himself, to stop them in their evil courses, to rouse them out of their indolence and sloth, and make them diligent in his service: he brings them into a wilderness to instruct them: the valley of trouble is a door of hope.

3. Let backsliders be engaged, by these persuasive arguments, to turn to the Lord. What amazing goodness did he show to this idolatrous, perverse people! how kind was he to afflict them, that, by sending mercy, he might allure them. Many may remember that it was better with them in time past than now. When they loved prayer and ordinances, when they kept good company, redeemed their time, and made more conscience of religion, they had more peace, comfort, and hope. Let those then who have neglected these good ways return to them; these precious promises are designed to invite and encourage them. If they do this, God will betroth them to himself, admit them into the most endearing and indissoluble relation; will bestow on them the greatest honour, in saying, *Thou art my people*; and they will enjoy the greatest happiness in being able to say, *Thou art my God*.

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## CHAPTER III.

By a vision of the prophet's receiving his bad wife again, her continuing in a state of separation, yet with hope of reconciliation, is shown the great compassion of God to Israel amidst their desolations and dispersions, and the hope of their conversion and recovery.

1 **THEN** said the LORD unto me, Go yet *again*, love a woman beloved of [her] friend, yet an adulteress, according to the love of the LORD toward the children of Israel, who look to other gods\*, and love flagons of wine, *idolatrous and drunken feasts*. 2 So I bought her to me for fifteen [pieces] of silver, *I paid her dower, about fifteen half crowns in money*, and [for] an homer of barley, and an half homer of barley, *that is, about fifteen bushels of barley*†. 3 And I said unto her, Thou shalt abide for me many days; thou shalt not play the harlot, and thou shalt not be for [another] man: so [will] I also [be] for thee; *that is, thou shalt continue some time in a state of separation, though in my house, as it is neither decent nor prudent to take thee again without due trial.*—*The explanation and meaning of this vision follows:* 4 For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and [without] teraphim, *they shall remain for a considerable time in a state resembling that of Hosea's wife, who was separated from her adulterous lovers, and the converse of her husband too. So shall they continue desolate and dispersed among the nations; without any king, ruler, or settled form of government; without any altar or ephod, that is, any priestly garments, by which they could consult Jehozah, or any image, statue, or teraphim, (little images of idol gods,) by which to consult them; that is, they shall be renounced of God, and have no instituted worship of him; and yet not practise idolatry: and this is exactly the case in which they now are.* 5 Afterward shall the child-

\* The wife he had espoused, after having lived some time well with him, is represented as going away and living with an adulterer; he is commanded to fetch her back again; that is, to go to this base woman, and invite her to return: this is designed to denote God's regard to the ten tribes, and his purpose to take them into covenant again, though they should seem to have been long forgotten by him.

† Others think that this was to be allowed her as a separate maintenance, till she was properly humbled for elopement.—It represents the sad condition of the Israelites, and yet shows that a remnant of them should be preserved.



dren of Israel return, and seek the LORD their God, *they shall again worship him in his appointed way*, and David their king, *that is, the Messiah*; and shall fear the LORD and his goodness in the latter days; *they shall be affected with his goodness in taking them again into covenant, and be led thereby to obedience. This shall be in the latter days of the gospel, when all Israel shall be saved.*

## REFLECTIONS.

1. GOD'S dealing with the Israelites, is a lively emblem of the case of sinners and the manner of God's dealing with them; and may assist us in judging of our own character and state. Sinners are departed from God; have thrown themselves out of his protection and family; and can neither comfortably address him, nor receive any agreeable addresses from him: yet he has a love of compassion toward them, and invites and encourages them to return to him. But, in order to their reconciliation, he first makes them sensible of their own unworthiness, and of his infinite mercy: he keeps them as it were in a state of separation till they are thoroughly humbled, and then communicates to them the joy of his pardoning mercy and favour: and it is an instance of his wisdom and kindness thus to humble those whom he intends to exalt.

2. Let us reflect on the present state of the Jews, as an accomplishment of this and many other prophecies. God has cast them out of his church and family; they have no king nor priest nor sacrifice; they live as exiles, upon sufferance; have no prophet, nor any such worship as he requires. Yet they are not idolaters; they abhor every thing that has an appearance of idolatry. God has merciful intentions toward them, and they shall at length return to the Lord; and receive Christ, as David their king. Their dispersion, and continuing a distinct people in these circumstances, confirm the truth of this prophecy, and the truth of christianity.

3. Let us attend to the instructive view of true religion, which is here given us. It is *fearing the Lord and his goodness*. It is not a slavish fear of God's wrath, but a veneration of him, arising from thinking of him as the best, as well as the greatest, of Beings; especially being affected with his goodness in sending Christ to redeem us; and admitting us into his covenant. Let us inquire then, how we are affected with this divine goodness; whether it engages us to a holy reverence; makes us afraid of offending so

good a Being; of making ungrateful returns for his kindnesses, and of losing our interest in his favour. Let us cherish this fear; for *happy is the man that thus feareth always.*

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## CHAPTER IV.

Contains a warning given to the ten tribes of the calamities that were coming upon them; and their sins are described as the cause of them.

1 **H**EAR the word of the LORD, ye children of Israel: for the LORD hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, *a suit or action against them*, because [there is] no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land, *though they make a profession of his religion.* 2 By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood; *vice spreads like an inundation; there are murders committed without intermission; so that one stream of blood meets another.* 3 Therefore shall the land mourn, and every one that dwelleth therein shall languish, with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven; yea, the fishes of the sea also shall be taken away; *there shall be a dreadful scarcity, and a general calamity.* 4 Yet let no man strive, nor reprove another; *it will be in vain to do it:* for thy people [are] as they that strive with the priest; *as among the Israelites, the last resort in controversy was to the priest, who consulted the oracle, Deut. xvii. 12., and he that would not hearken to its decision was to be put to death as a presumptuous sinner. To strive with the priest, is probably a proverbial expression for an incorrigible offender.* 5 Therefore shalt thou fall in the day *by open violence*, and the prophet also, *who seduced thee from God*, shall fall with thee in the night, *by secret mischief*; and I will destroy thy mother, *or city, that is, Samaria, or, the whole Israelitish nation.*

6 My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children\*. 7 As they were

\* When the ten tribes revolted, Jeroboam drove out the Levites, imagining that they would draw the people to the temple worship, and to the house of David; therefore, when he set up the calves, he made priests of the lowest of the people; thus knowledge was lost; and these are the priests which are threatened.

increased *in wealth and children*, so they sinned against me: [therefore] will I change their glory into shame, *into reproach and calamity*. 8 They eat up the sin *offerings* of my people, and they set their heart on their iniquity: *they wished them to commit many sins, that they might have many sacrifices to feast upon*. 9 And there shall be, like people, like priest: and I will punish them for their ways, and reward them their doings; *they shall be alike in character and in ruin*. 10 For they shall eat, and not have enough: *they shall either be insatiable, or want necessary food*: they shall commit whoredom, and shall not increase; *their children shall be cut off*: because they have left off to take heed to the LORD. 11 Whoredom and wine and new wine take away the heart, *stupidify reason and conscience, and destroy every good sentiment and principle*.

12 My people ask counsel at their stocks, *their wooden images*, and their staff declareth unto them; *they use divination by rods or a staff, that is, by seeing which way it falls*: for the spirit of whoredom hath caused [them] to err, and they have gone a whoring from under their God; *their corrupt principles lead them to corrupt practices, and their wicked practices strengthen their bad principles*. 13 They sacrifice upon the tops of the mountains, and burn incense upon the hills, under oaks and poplars and elms, because the shadow thereof [is] good: therefore your daughters shall commit whoredom, and your spouses shall commit adultery; *as they have sunk into idolatry, which is often figuratively represented as whoredom, therefore they shall literally suffer by that vice, which shall run through their families, and produce the most distressing effects*. 14 I will not, or rather, *shall I not*, punish your daughters when they commit whoredom, nor your spouses when they commit adultery: for themselves are separated with whores, and they sacrifice with harlots: therefore the people [that] doth not understand shall fall.

15 Though thou, Israel, play the harlot, [yet] let not Judah offend; and come not ye unto Gilgal, *where the national covenant with God was renewed, and the Israelites were circumcised when they came out of Egypt, and which, therefore, was looked upon as a sacred place*; neither go ye up to Beth-aven, or, Bethel, *where the calf was set up; called in contempt Beth-aven, the house of iniquity, instead of Bethel, the house of God; or, perhaps the expression is proverbial, as if he had said, Take care that you have not your Gilgals and Beth-avens; do not run into any practices like theirs*; nor swear, The LORD liveth; *do not swear at an ido-*

*latrous altar, or raise any other altar to Jehovah; but make your solemn appeals to God, and offer sacrifices at his temple only.* 16 For Israel slideth back as a backsliding heifer that will not bear the yoke upon her neck: now the LORD will feed them as a lamb in a large place, he giveth them plenty, yet they rebel: 17 Ephraim, or, the kingdom of Israel, [is] joined to idols: let him alone; there is no hope of reclaiming him; let him go on to his utter ruin. 18 Their drink is sour; they are universally corrupt; or, they have filled themselves with drink at their idolatrous feasts, till it hath turned sour on their stomachs, and they have thrown it up: they have committed whoredom continually: her rulers [with] shame do love, or, have loved shame and bribes, Give ye; that is all their cry; having ruined themselves by their debaucheries, they used the most wicked means of getting money. 19 The wind hath bound her up in her wings, and they shall be ashamed because of their sacrifices; the judgments of God shall come rushing like a whirlwind, that shall raise them from the ground and carry them away; they shall be cast out of their land, and as they pass along, and see their idols and their altars, they shall be ashamed to think that they trusted in gods that could not save them.

### REFLECTIONS.

1. SEE the source of sin and mischief; ignorance of God. There was no knowledge of God in the land of Israel: though in Judah he was known, and the ten tribes had distinguished advantages for acquiring the same knowledge. This is the case of multitudes in this christian land: and no wonder; for they reject knowledge, at least take no pains to attain it. Be solicitous, then, to be wise yourselves, and to teach your children religious knowledge; without which, God will forget them, and leave them to all the miseries of ignorance and a reprobate mind.

2. See the dreadful consequences of sin. God has a controversy with, or an action against, sinners, for being ignorant of him; disobeying his law, and breaking his covenant. And it is easy to see how it will end: God will be justified, and the sinner confounded. Let us be desirous to end this controversy; and make peace with him, who is the most dreadful adversary; but the most kind, powerful, and faithful friend.

3. See the wickedness of those who are glad of the sins of others, because gainful to themselves, v. 8. This is the case of too

many in the world; they are glad of the extravagance and debauchery of others, because they get their business, buy their estates, or some way or other turn their vices to their own advantage. But this is a most wicked temper, and shows an entire want of love to God and man; and however men may be pleased with what they gain by other men's sins, God will punish them for their ways, and reward them for their doings, *v. 9.*

4. How dreadful a thing is it for men to be let alone in their sins; *v. 17., Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone.* So now, providence, ordinances, and the Spirit, are as it were ordered to let many alone; they will hear no reproof, regard no checks of conscience, and endeavour to stifle all remorse; and therefore *are given up to their own hearts' lusts.* To such a sad state may men be brought by habits of wickedness, and the righteous judgments of God. They may in the mean time think themselves happy, because their consciences are at ease; but this is the last stage of degeneracy, and the forerunner of utter destruction.

5. Since there is so much sin in the world, and these are its terrible effects, let God's people be very cautious that they never offend, *v. 15.* Let them guard against the infection of evil principles, customs, and examples. They know more, have felt and experienced more, and profess more, than others. Let them be very watchful, shun the occasions of sin, resist temptations to it, and daily implore the divine blessing and assistance, that they may *hold faith and a good conscience, and persevere to the end.*

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## CHAPTER V.

Declares God's judgments against the priests, the people, and the princes of Israel, for their manifold sins, until they repent.

1 **H**EAR ye this, O priests; and hearken, ye house of Israel; and give ye ear, O house of the king; for judgment [is] toward you, because ye have been a snare on Mizpah, and a net spread upon Tabor\*. 2 And the revolvers, *or idolaters,* are profound to

\* Tabor and Mizpah, two mountains, one on either side of Jordan; during the civil wars in Israel, their princes and great men, according to their different parties, took opportunities of doing mischief, and from their castles and fortresses would sally out to plunder their neighbours, and rob and destroy innocent travellers, especially those who were going to Jerusalem to worship; or it may mean, that they insuared men into idolatry.

make slaughter, *they cunningly contrive to insnare or destroy men though by my providence and my prophets, I [have been] a rebuker of them all.* 3 I know Ephraim, and Israel is not hid from me; *I know their deep designs: for now, O Ephraim, thou committest whoredom, [and] Israel is defiled.* 4 They will not frame their doings to turn unto their God: for the spirit of whoredoms [is] in the midst of them; *they lay schemes for it; and they have not known the LORD, neither his greatness nor goodness.* 5 And the pride of Israel doth testify to his face; *pride is seen in their religion and in all they do: therefore shall Israel and Ephraim fall in their iniquity; 6 Judah also shall fall with them.* 6 They shall go with their flocks and with their herds to seek the LORD; but they shall not find [him;] he hath withdrawn himself from them; *Judah shall keep up a profession of religion; but in vain shall they offer sacrifices, because they are more fond of idols, and addicted to their service.* 7 They have dealt treacherously against the LORD: for they have begotten strange children; *they have taken strange, heathen wives, or, brought their children up in idolatry: now shall a month devour them with their portions\* ; in a short time their idols and substance shall be destroyed.—What follows is supposed to refer to the invasion of Judah by Pekah, when he slew one hundred and twenty thousand men in one day.* 8 Blow ye the cornet in Gibeah, [and] the trumpet in Ramah: cry aloud [at] Beth-aven, *frontier towns first attacked; the enemy cometh after thee, O Benjamin, it is thy turn next.* 9 Ephraim shall be desolate in the day of rebuke: among the tribes of Israel have I made known that which shall surely be; *I have given them fair warning, and declared my irrevocable judgment.* 10 The princes of Judah were like them that remove the bound; *they were arbitrary and tyrannical, and trampled both upon law and justice: [therefore] I will pour out my wrath upon them like water, like a deluge.* 11 Ephraim [is] oppressed [and] broken in judgment, *by his tyrannical princes and the kings of Assyria, because he willingly walked after the commandment; he not only worshipped the calf and other idols, for fear of penal laws, but did it willingly, and liked it better than the worship of Jehovah.* 12 Therefore [will] I [be] unto Ephraim as a moth, and to the house of Judah as rottenness; *I will cause them gradually to moulder away and consume them.* 13 When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah [saw] his wound, then went Ephraim to the Assyrian,

\* Bp. Newcome translates the last clause thus, *Now shall the locusts devour their portions.*

referring to the treaties of the kings of Israel and Judah with different kings of Assyria, who only got money of them, saw the weakness of their country, and at length overran it; and sent to king Jareb to plead for or defend them, because of the alliances between them; yet could he not heal you, nor cure you of your wound. 14 For I [will be] unto Ephraim as a lion, and as a young lion to the house of Judah: I, [even] I, will tear and go away: like a lion, coming and taking away a carcase, and then going securely and lying down in his den, so I will take away, and none shall rescue [him.]

15 I will go [and] return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face; *I will not interpose for their deliverance till they are truly humble and penitent: in their affliction they will seek me early, that is, earnestly; in the manner described in the beginning of the next chapter.*

## REFLECTIONS.

1. WE here see how much the sins of men may be aggravated by many circumstances attending them. Notice is here taken of the aggravation of the sins of Israel: they were the effect of contrivance and deliberation; they were very injurious to others; not only to those whom they murdered, but to those they enticed to idolatry. And their sins, with every circumstance attending them, were all known to God, and none of their profound contrivances hid from him: this they well knew. They had dealt treacherously with God; and violated the most sacred engagements. God had rebuked them for it again and again, by his judgments and prophets; and solemnly declared what would surely be the consequence. Yet they went on in sin; and at the same time showed a great deal of pride in their privileges and blessings. Let us attend to these circumstances, as aggravations of sin: and be cautious, lest we incur the same heavy charge.

2. We see, in v. 4., what the duty of impenitent sinners is. It is God's work to convert sinners; without his grace, all their attempts will be ineffectual. But something is to be done by them, and is expected from them. They must *frame their doings; consider their ways*, and the consequences of their actions; attend to the reproofs and exhortations which are given them; and make use of the means of reformation: then God will communicate his grace. But if they will not do this; to expect his grace, or

to hope that by sacrifices, or any religious services, they shall make their peace with him, is an high affront to him; and he will withdraw himself from them.

3. See the importance of a steady opposition to all impositions upon liberty and conscience. The Israelites willingly walked after idolatrous commandments, therefore God gave them up to their oppressors. Idolatry was the religion of the court, enforced by penal laws; yet here the people are threatened and condemned for conforming to it. Those who subject their consciences to their rulers in religious matters, may justly be left to feel the weight of arbitrary government. When the boundaries of conscience and religion are removed, a deluge of misery breaks in. To stand firm in defence of religious liberty, is the most likely way to maintain and perfect our civil liberties.

4. See the design of God in afflictions, and to what purposes they should be improved. God corrects men that they may be humbled, acknowledge their offences, and seek him earnestly; that they may feel the burden of sin, as well as of affliction, and seek reconciliation to God. It is a sign of a slothful, impious spirit, not to pray before afflictions come: but to be afflicted and not to pray earnestly, shows a stupid, senseless, incorrigible spirit. Let the afflicted *stir up themselves to take hold of God: for they that seek him early shall find him.*

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## CHAPTER VI.

Contains an exhortation to repentance, and a complaint of the untowardness and iniquity of Israel and Judah.—The first three verses should have been joined to the former chapter.

*IN their affliction they will seek me early, saying, 1 Come, and let us return unto the LORD; let us resolve to return to him, and invite and encourage one another to do so: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. 2 After two days, in a little time, will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight; this surprising change will be like a resurrection from the dead. 3 Then shall we know, [if] we follow on to know the LORD; if we take pains, he will bless our endeavours: his going forth is prepared as the*



morning ; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter [and] former rain unto the earth ; *his favour shall become more and more conspicuous, as the morning grows brighter and brighter till the sun is risen ; he will revive us by his returning goodness, as showers, and sunshine after them, revive the earth. But it is intimated, that the reformation will be only partial, and of short continuance.*

4 O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee, or for thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? *how shall I show thee mercy? for, or since, your goodness [is] as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away.* 5 Therefore have I hewed [them] by the prophets ; I have slain them by the words of my mouth ; *I have employed my prophets to denounce dreadful judgments against them, by which they are slain and hewn in pieces, (the prophets being frequently said to do that, which they foretold should be done.)* and thy judgments [are as] the light [that] goeth forth ; *the judgments to be executed upon thee shall be light as the day, and all that see them shall acknowledge the justice of them.—I will deal so with thee, because my commands have been reasonable and kind:* 6 For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice, or, rather than sacrifice ; and the knowledge of God, a practical sense of his presence, perfections, and declarations, more than burnt offerings, rather than any ceremonial observances whatever\*. 7 But they like men, like Adam, have transgressed the covenant ; *they imitated his apostacy, and transgressed the covenant: there, in the place where the covenant was given, have they dealt treacherously against me ; as Adam transgressed in paradise, so they forgot their engagements as soon as they were made, and in the very place where they were made.* 8 Gilead [is] a city of them that work iniquity, [and is] polluted with blood : *instead of being a city of refuge, where those that accidentally killed another should have found protection, murderers were protected, and the innocent delivered up and punished as murderers.* 9 And as troops of robbers wait for a man, [so] the company of priests murder in the way to Shechem by consent : for they commit lewdness, or, presumptuous wickedness. 10 I have seen an horrible thing in the house of Israel ; *such enormities as cannot be mentioned without horror ; idolatry and uncleanness ; which generally went together : there is the whore-*

\* Not that God was indifferent to these, for he had required them. The meaning is, that God would not accept their sacrifices, unless the knowledge of himself and the practice of moral duties were joined with them ; and that if mercy and sacrifice interfered, mercy was to be preferred.

dom of Ephraim, Israel is defiled. 11 Also, O Judah, he hath set an harvest for thee, *he hath appointed a time when thou shalt be reaped by the sickle of divine vengeance; as thou hast imitated the sins of Israel, so thou shalt share in their judgments; when I returned, or, would have prevented, the captivity of my people.*

### REFLECTIONS.

1. SEE the duty and happiness of returning to God under his corrections. The design of afflictions is to bring men to repentance and amendment: and it is great encouragement to both, that he will then *heal and bind up*; remove judgments, command deliverance, and *speaks peace to the soul*. Let us encourage others to do this; and so further the design of the providence and word of God.

2. See the importance of the knowledge of God; not merely a general knowledge of him, but a practical knowledge; a religious regard to him. It is better than burnt offerings and sacrifices. It is as the light of the morning; preserving from error and temptation, and giving life, peace, and hope to the soul. The way to attain it, is *to follow on to know the Lord*; to esteem it the best knowledge, and gain it by reading, meditation, and prayer. Follow on then, without being discouraged; and labour to make continual improvement in so glorious and comprehensive a science; for *this is life eternal, to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent.*

3. Whatever pious purposes and resolutions we form, we should labour to preserve. How pathetically does the blessed God complain of Ephraim's fickleness and insincerity! and may he not still complain thus of many, and, in some measure, of all of us? Men promise amendment, but do not perform; they are wavering and unstable, even when sincere; begin well, but do not persevere. This is greatly mischievous to ourselves, dishonourable to religion, injurious to others, and will forfeit all claim to the divine favour; for *he alone that endureth to the end shall be saved.*

4. Let us attend to the superior excellencies of moral duties above ritual observances. God here requireth both, but prefers the former, when they come into competition. Our Lord quotes this passage twice, to vindicate his healing on the sabbath-day, which was shewing mercy to men's bodies, and his eating with publicans, which was in mercy to their souls. We should never place the whole of religion in rites and forms; remembering,

that the knowledge of God, and obedience to him, are the main things. There are greater and lesser matters of the law; the former ought to be preferred, but the latter by no means neglected. *These ought ye to have done, and not to have left the other undone.*

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## CHAPTER VII.

Contains a reproof of manifold sins; and declarations of God's wrath against them for their hypocrisy.

1 **WHEN** I would have healed Israel, *when I took the methods that had a tendency to heal and reclaim them*, then the iniquity of Ephraim was discovered, and the wickedness of Samaria; *they grew worse and worse*: for they commit falsehood; and the thief cometh in, [and] the troop of robbers spoileth without; *they added public to private wickedness, were deceitful in their promises of amendment, and were guilty of rapine and fraud.* 2 And they consider not in their hearts [that] I remember all their wickedness: now their own doings have beset them about; *the evil consequences of them are just coming upon them*; they are before my face; *it will be evident that I remember them, by the punishments I inflict.* 3 They make the king glad with their wickedness, and the princes with their lies; *to please the king and princes they run into all manner of wickedness and debauchery; they discover a mean, servile, and deceitful temper, and regard not what they say or do, if it will but please their rulers.* 4 They [are] all adulterers, as an oven heated by the baker, [who] ceaseth from raising after he hath kneaded the dough, until it be leavened; *the heat of their lust is like an oven, so hot that the baker does not find it necessary to add more fuel; but having leavened his dough, finds the oven fit to receive it.* 5 In the day of our king, *the day of his birth, or accession, (when feasts are usual at courts,)* the princes have made [him] sick with bottles of wine; he stretched out his hand with scorners; *he has put himself on a level with them: forgetting his rank and dignity, he has been intoxicated, and joined with them in their banter of religion.* 6 For they have made ready their heart like an oven, whiles they lie in wait: their baker sleepeth all the night; in the morning it burneth as a flaming fire; *they have been pushed on by their violent lusts to watch all night for opportunities of committing wickedness; referring to the former*

*simile*, ver. 4., there they are compared to an heated oven, here, to an oven that has taken fire: the baker neglecting it, falls asleep, and in the morning he awakes, and finds his house on fire. 7 They are all hot as an oven, and have devoured their judges; magistracy is at an end, or does not answer its institution; all their kings are fallen: [there is] none among them that calleth unto me; many of their kings are fallen one after another, yet they are not humble and serious. 8 Ephraim, he hath mixed himself among the people; I have separated the ten tribes for a peculiar people to myself; but they are become like their idolatrous neighbours; Ephraim is a cake not turned; if they have made any attempts for a reformation, they were weak and ineffectual; they were like a cake burnt on one side, and cold on the other; they were hot about forms and ceremonies, but cold and indifferent about the vitals of religion. 9 Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth [it] not; his alliance with strangers hath been detrimental to him, yet he never considered it: yea, grey hairs, symptoms of the decay and approaching ruin of the state, are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not. 10 And the pride of Israel, which appears in all their actions, testifieth to his face: and yet they do not return to the LORD their God, nor seek him for all this.

11 Ephraim also is like a silly dove without heart, easily insnared: they call to Egypt, they go to Assyria. 12 When they shall go, I will spread my net upon them, entangle and disappoint them in their designs; I will bring them down as a fowler does the fowls of the heaven, they shall fall when they think to escape; I will chastise them as their congregation hath heard; as, from time to time, I have threatened by my prophets in their solemn assemblies. 13 Woe unto them! for they have fled from me: destruction unto them! because they have transgressed against me: though I have redeemed them, granted them many deliverances, yet they have spoken lies against me, they have flattered me with promises of amendment, which they have never performed. 14 And they have not cried unto me with their heart, when they howled upon their beds, in their public and solemn days they have made an extravagant noise on their beds, or the couches on which they lay at their feasts: they assemble themselves for corn and wine, [and] they rebel against me; instead of assembling in a religious manner, to acknowledge the divine goodness, they have abused my bounty, and turned their solemn feasts into meaus and instruments of rebelling against me. 15 Though I have bound [and] strengthened their arms like a skilful and tender surgeon, yet do they imagine mis-

chief against me, *they study some new idolatry, and abuse their strength to my dishonour.* 16 They return, [but] not to the most High, *they pretend to reform, but do not*: they are like a deceitful bow, *that turns the arrows into a wrong direction*: their princes shall fall by the sword for the rage of their tongue, *with which they speak against God, his prophets, and religion*: this [shall be] their derision in the land of Egypt; *instead of being better looked upon by Egypt, which they have courted as an ally, they shall be had in derision for their mean compliances, and be left by them without help and pity.*

## REFLECTIONS.

1. IN this chapter we see the source of much wickedness in the world; and that is, forgetfulness of God's omniscience and justice. When men grow so desperately bad, as this people were, it is because (v. 2.) they consider not in their hearts that God remembers all their wickedness; not only their wickedness in general, but *all* of it: and that he not only observes and remembers it, but will judge them for it. Men profess to believe this, are ready to acknowledge it, and cannot help doing so; but they do not *consider it*. Let us reflect upon it with self-application; and seriously consider, that all our sins are before God, in the book of his remembrance; and that *for all these things he will bring us into judgment.*

2. We may observe the odious nature and mischievous effects of drunkenness. The princes thought they might indulge more than ordinary on the king's day; but see what an effect it had upon him; and his companions, we may suppose, were no better. This vice makes men sick, and injures their health; and this alone is sufficient to deter any wise man from it. But it also makes them scorners; men in their cups are prone to make a jest of religion; to talk and act, as the fools and sots their companions do. How careful then should we be to guard against excess, and to *be sober and temperate in all things.*

3. How lamentable, and yet how common is it, for men to be ignorant of their own characters, and declensions, v. 9. This is sometimes the case of states and kingdoms and churches; often of particular professors of religion; all about them see their grey hairs; observe that they grow more peevish, covetous, or indifferent to ordinances and religion; but they see it not; and are

angry if it is hinted to them, or if they are only exhorted to inquire into their state. Have not we therefore great need to watch over ourselves, lest we insensibly decline; and to guard against the first tendency to apostacy?

4. We may observe how abominable professions of repentance and amendment are to God, when they are not made with sincerity. Israel is often charged with this; they committed falsehood; were like a half baked cake, (*v. 13, 16.*), which, though good on one side, is no better than dough on the other. This is a horrid prevarication with God, and tends more than any thing to displease him, and to sear the conscience. When men deal deceitfully with God, it is just in him to make them a scorn among their fellow-creatures, and to bring woe and destruction upon them.

5. We may from hence be certain, that God will fulfil all the threatenings of his word against sinners, *v. 12.* The Israelites had heard those threatenings from the law, which was read among them, and from the warnings of their prophets; yet they hoped to escape. But here he assures them, and every sinner also, that he will be as good as his word, and *will not deny himself.* And the warnings they have had of this, will make their guilt greater, and their punishment heavier. Have we not need then to take notice of every word of God which we hear in the congregation? for the time will come, when we shall find it all to be true, and that not one word is fallen to the ground.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

In which destruction is threatened for their impiety and idolatry.

1 [SET] the trumpet to thy mouth, *sound an alarm, and give them warning of approaching judgments.* [He,] *that is, the king of Assyria,* [shall come,] as an eagle against the house of the LORD, *that is, against Israel his people, to tear them to pieces,* because they have transgressed my covenant, and trespassed against my law. 2 Israel shall cry unto me, *My God, we know thee: in their trouble they will claim relation to me: but* 3 Israel hath cast off [the thing that is] good, *my true worship and service: therefore the enemy shall pursue him.* 4 They have set up kings,

*several kings, who founded their thrones in rebellion and blood, but not by me : they have made princes, and I knew [it] not ; they did not ask advice of me, nor had they my warrant for doing it : of their silver and their gold have they made them idols, that they may be cut off ; they have exposed themselves to destruction by their idolatries. 5 Thy calf, O Samaria, (the calf of Bethel, near which place Samaria stood,) hath cast [thee] off, it cannot protect thee ; mine anger is kindled against them : how long [will it be] ere they attain to innocency, ere they return to my pure worship? 6 For from Israel [was] it also : the workmen made it ; therefore it [is] not God ; it was not my appointment, but their own invention : but the calf of Samaria shall be broken in pieces, and carried away by the king of Assyria, (as it actually was.) 7 For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind, because they have taken irregular methods, the end shall be confusion : it hath no stalk : the bud shall yield no meal : if so be it yield, the strangers shall swallow it up ; a beautiful gradation, in allusion to corn ; it shall either not spring up, or not ear ; or something shall prevent its being ground into meal ; or strangers shall eat it ; a series of disappointments shall pursue them. 8 Israel is swallowed up ; it shall be so by the Assyrians : now shall they be among the Gentiles, whose alliance they courted, as a vessel wherein [is] no pleasure ; as a broken, despised vessel. 9 For they are gone up to Assyria, they shall certainly go up as captives there, a wild ass alone by himself ; because he has been untractable and incorrigible, like a wild ass : Ephraim hath hired lovers ; that is, allies ; and did not trust in God, but in them. 10 Yea, though they have hired among the nations, now will I gather them together for captivity and destruction, and they shall sorrow a little, or, in a little time, for the burden of the king of princes ; for the burdens which the king of Assyria, the great king, shall lay upon them. 11 Because Ephraim hath made many altars to sin, hath wickedly raised altars to idols, while mine hath been dishonoured and neglected, for this I will visit them, altars shall be unto him to sin. 12 I have written to him the great things of my law, [but] they were counted as a strange thing ; as a thing in which they had no concern. 13 They sacrifice flesh [for] the sacrifices of mine offerings, and eat [it ;] they regard their sacrifices rather as feasts than acts of devotion ; [but] the LORD accepteth them not ; now will he remember their iniquity, and visit their sins : they shall return to Egypt ; a proverbial expression, for the extremity of distress and misery. 14 For Israel hath forgotten his Maker, and buildeth temples to his calves ;*

and Judah hath multiplied fenced cities, *without trusting in God*: but I will send a fire upon his cities, and it shall devour the palaces thereof.

### REFLECTIONS.

1. WE may observe the progress of sin: Israel made idols, transgressed the covenant, and trespassed against the law. This began with *casting off the thing that was good*. Apostacy begins with omissions of duty; neglecting prayer, the reading of the scriptures, and the religious observance of the sabbath: then the transition is easy to trespassing against the law and violating the covenant, and so to committing all iniquity with greediness. Let us beware of sins of omission, for *they will increase unto more ungodliness*.

2. See the inseparable connexion between vice and misery. Israel had *sown to the wind, and reaped the whirlwind*: their schemes were empty and fruitless, and the issue of them destructive. There will be as exact a correspondence between what men do and what they shall receive hereafter, as there is between sowing and reaping. Therefore let us not deceive ourselves; *God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap; he that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; he that soweth to the spirit shall reap life everlasting*.

3. How sad is it for men to neglect the law of God! The great privilege of the Jews was, that *to them were committed the oracles of God*. And however men may esteem the things of God's law, they are in themselves great things; both excellent and necessary: they are sent to us from the great God, by his inspired messengers: and it is an inestimable privilege to have them *written* to us, that we may read and study and learn them. Yet many christians *count them as strange things*; as things in which they have no concern; or not of such importance as to deserve their serious attention. Let us reverence the word of God, and preserve a due sense of its vast importance; otherwise *the Lord will not accept us*; for *he that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, shall have his prayer turned away also, and God will remember his iniquities*.

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## CHAPTER IX.

A prophecy of the distress and captivity of Israel for their sins and idolatry.—This was probably delivered at the time of harvest, when they were gathering the fruits of the earth, and preparing offerings for their idols.

1 **REJOICE** not, O Israel, for joy, as [other] people; *other nations rejoice at the harvest, but thou hast little reason to do so: for thou hast gone a whoring from thy God, thou hast loved a reward upon every corn floor; thou hast loved to take from every corn floor a reward for thy idol deities.* 2 The floor and the wine press shall not feed them, and the new wine shall fail in her; *the grapes and olives shall afford but little wine and oil.* 3 They shall not dwell in the LORD'S land; but Ephraim shall return to Egypt, *some of them shall fly there to escape the king of Assyria, but most of them shall be carried into Assyria, and they shall eat unclean [things] in Assyria; things forbidden by the law, (to which they will have some regard in meats and drinks, though they neglect it in other things,) not being able to procure other food.* 4 They shall not offer wine [offerings] to the LORD, neither shall they be pleasing unto him: their sacrifices [shall be] unto them as the bread of mourners; all that eat thereof shall be polluted; *as those who touch dead bodies contract pollution, and cannot attend any sacrifice without polluting it, so their offerings shall be reckoned unclean, and all who eat of them polluted: for their bread for their soul, what is offered as an atonement, or rather, the bread that supports their lives, shall not come into the house of the LORD; they shall have so little, that if their offerings were not polluted, they shall have none to present. And if this is the case on common days,* 5 What will ye do in the solemn day, and in the day of the feast of the LORD? *what sorrowful feasts shall ye keep then!* 6 For, lo, they are gone because of destruction; *they are fled into foreign countries to escape destruction in their own land: Egypt shall gather them up, Memphis shall bury them: the pleasant [places] for their silver, nettles shall possess them: thorns [shall be] in their tabernacles; their houses, which are adorned with silver and rich ornaments, shall be a heap of ruins.* 7 The days of visitation are come; the days of recompence are come; Israel shall know [it:] the prophet [is] a fool,

the spiritual man [is] mad; *those who pretend to prophesy are foolish and insane, they are suffered to impose upon thee by assurances that these judgments will never come;* for the multitude of thine iniquity, and the great hatred thou hast to true religion. 8 The watchmen of Ephraim [was] with my God: [but] the prophet [is] a snare of a fowler in all his ways, [and] hatred in, *or against,* the house of his God; *there was a time when you had wise and faithful prophets, who deserved to be called watchmen, and gave you faithful warnings; but now, your false prophets are a snare to you, and hasten your ruin.* 9 They have deeply corrupted [themselves,] as in the days of Gibeah; *a proverb for abandoned wickedness:* [therefore] he will remember their iniquity, he will visit their sins; *that is, they shall suffer like Benjamin.* (See Judges xix. 29, &c.) 10 I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness; I saw your fathers as the first ripe in the fig tree at her first time; *I was pleased with them, and favourable to them, as a traveller who, in a sandy desert, meets with a pleasant spot where there are grapes and figs:* [but] they, *their descendants,* went to Baal-peor, *the most filthy and detestable idol,* and separated themselves unto that shame, *gave a loose to all their sinful inclinations;* and [their] abominations were according as they loved; *they multiplied their idols according to their own lusts and fancies.* 11 [As for] Ephraim, their glory shall fly away like a bird, from the birth, and from the womb, and from the conception; *some shall lose their children when they are just born, others shall miscarry, and others be barren: they glory in their numbers, but they shall all fly away and be lost.* 12 Though they bring up their children, yet will I bereave them, [that there shall] not [be] a man [left;] *those that grow up shall be destroyed:* yea, woe also to them when I depart from them! 13 Ephraim, as I saw Tyrus, [is] planted in a pleasant place: but Ephraim shall bring forth his children to the murderer; *that is, to the king of Assyria, who made a fruitless attempt upon Tyre, but took Samaria, and put to death great multitudes.* 14 Give them, O LORD: what wilt thou give? give them a miscarrying womb and dry breasts; *if I should pray for this people, what shall I ask? I see such misery coming upon the country, that I could wish there might be but few born, rather than many should live to be so miserable.* 15 All their wickedness [is] in Gilgal; *great favour was shown to their ancestors there, and there the covenant was renewed when they came into Canaan; but now it is the head quarters of their idolatry:* for there, *or, therefore* I hated them: for the wickedness of their doings I will drive them out of mine house, *out of my family,*

and I will love them no more: all their princes [are] revolters; have revolted from religion and justice, and propagated wickedness among the people. 16 Ephraim is smitten like a blasted tree, their root is dried up, they shall bear no fruit: yea though they bring forth, yet will I slay [even] the beloved [fruit] of their womb; their dearest children shall be early destroyed. 17 My God will cast them away, because they did not hearken unto him; the source of all is their not hearkening to God's law, his prophets, and threatenings: and they shall be wanderers among the nations; shall be dispersed all over the earth (as they are at this day.) St. James addresses the twelve tribes, as those which are scattered abroad.

## REFLECTIONS.

1. NONE have less reason for joy than apostates and revolters. Israel is here forbidden to rejoice, because they had no reason, no ground, for it. Those who know not God may rejoice in his providential favours. His people have great reason to rejoice in him and his blessings; but revolters have none; for, as their sins are peculiarly displeasing to God, their punishment will be most dreadful. Guilt and fear may well spoil all their mirth. He that desires to secure true and lasting joy, must fear God, and keep close to him and his service.

2. It becomes us seriously to reflect on the manner in which we behave on our solemn days. Israel is here reminded of their ill behaviour, and directed to consider what they should do when their feasts ceased, that they should have no sacrifices to offer, and that they would not be accepted if they had, as they would be turned out of the Lord's land. Let this lead us to inquire what regard we pay to our solemn days; what improvement we make of them; and what reflections will fill our minds under the want or loss of them. Miserable indeed will be the case of those who are turned out of the Lord's heavenly land, and, in the horror of despair, wish for one of those days of *that visitation*, which they now despise or undervalue.

3. See the fatal consequences of God's departing from men. After he had threatened Ephraim with the loss of all their comforts, then this comes in also, as the most dreadful circumstance of all; *yea, woe also to them when I depart from them*. When God finally departs, every thing that is good and happy is taken away; every thing that is painful and tormenting is inflicted.

Innumerable, eternal woes, will follow that unhappy creature from whom God is departed. Let us dread this, as the greatest evil, and keep ourselves in the love of God. *The Lord is with you while you are with him; but if ye will not hearken unto him, God will cast you off for ever; v. 17.*

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## CHAPTER X.

In which Israel is reproved and threatened for their impiety and idolatry, and exhorted to repentance.

1 **ISRAEL** [is] an empty vine, he bringeth forth fruit unto himself; *like flourishing vines which empty their juices, but all to themselves*: according to the multitude of his fruit he hath increased the altars; according to the goodness of his land they have made goodly images; *they abused their prosperity to idolatry, and served their gods with the gifts of Providence.* 2 Their heart is divided *between God and idols*; now shall they be found faulty: he, *the king of Assyria, by God's permission*, shall break down their altars, he shall spoil their images. 3 For now they, *some of them*, shall say, We have no king, because we feared not the LORD; what then should a king do to us? *we are in such an unhappy situation that the best king could not retrieve our affairs.* 4 They have spoken words, *mere hypocritical, empty words*, swearing falsely in making a covenant *with God*: thus judgment springeth up as hemlock in the furrows of the field; *they make the administration of justice a mischief and a curse, rather than a blessing.* 5 The inhabitants of Samaria shall fear, because of the calves of Beth-aven: for the people thereof shall mourn over it, and the priests thereof [that] rejoiced on it, for the glory thereof, because it is departed from it; *because the calf of Bethel is taken away, and has lost all its reputation.* 6 It shall be also carried into Assyria [for] a present to king Jareb; *the calf shall be taken away by the king of Assyria; and sent as a present to (or, to plead with) king Jareb, to make up matters; that is, in their domestic broils their god himself shall be carried away: therefore, Ephraim shall receive shame, and Israel shall be ashamed of his own counsel; of his policy in setting up the calf.* 7 [As for] Samaria, her king is cut off as the foam upon the water; *the whole kingdom shall have a short-lived glory, and*

vanish like a bubble. 8 The high places also of Aven, *their iniquity and idolatry*, the sin of Israel shall be destroyed: the thorn and the thistle shall come up on their altars; and they shall say *with the utmost consternation* to the mountains, Cover us; and to the hills, Fall on us: *such shall be their misery, that they will wish for the most terrible death, rather than continue to endure it.* 9 O Israel, thou hast sinned from the days of Gibeah; *or, more than in the days of Gibeah*: there they stood in array against Benjamin: the battle in Gibeah against the children of iniquity did not overtake them; *neither the first nor the second time; but, as they were almost all destroyed at last, so shall it be with you.* 10 [It is] in my desire that I should chastise them; *it is my purpose to do it*; and the people shall be gathered against them, when they shall bind themselves in their two furrows; *that is, when they shall be chastised for their two iniquities, for their calves in Dan and Bethel; or rather, when the Assyrians shall reduce them to a state of servitude.* 11 And Ephraim [is as] an heifer [that is] taught, [and] loveth to tread out [the corn;] but I passed the yoke over upon her fair neck; *probably referring to the general methods which God took at first to form them to obedience: I will make Ephraim to ride, or be ridden; that is, they shall be oppressed and carried captive by the Assyrians; Judah shall plough, [and] Jacob shall break his clods; Judah shall yet be preserved, and return, while Ephraim shall be oppressed and destroyed.—Then follows an exhortation to repentance.* 12 Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground of knowledge: for [it is] time to seek the LORD, till he come and rain righteousness upon you; *that is, If ye sow goodness, ye shall reap divine mercy; if ye cultivate the knowledge of Jehovah, he will pour upon you the rain of righteous benignity\*.* 13 Ye have ploughed wickedness, ye have reaped iniquity; ye have eaten the fruit of lies; *deceitful fruit, the just reward of idolatry*: because thou didst trust in thy way of worship, in the multitude of thy mighty men. 14 Therefore shall a tumult arise among thy people, and all thy fortresses shall be spoiled, as Shalman spoiled Beth-arbel in the day of battle: the mother was dashed in pieces upon [her] children; *referring to an event, then well known; that is, God will bring the same enemies and do as cruel executions†*: 15 So shall Beth-el do unto you because of your great wickedness; *it is not your enemies, but your sins, which*

\* See Bp. Newcome, in loc.

† This threatening came to pass at Arbela in Armenia, in the famous battle between Alexander and Darius.

*are the cause of this: in a morning, that is, soon, and with great despatch, shall the king of Israel utterly be cut off.*

## REFLECTIONS.

1. WHEN men are destitute of real religion, they can find little comfort in any of their enjoyments, v. 3. When their hearts are divided between God and the world, and they worship gold, as Israel did the calves, it is no wonder that God should take away the tokens of his favour; and what can wealth and honour then do for them? If the fear and love of God influence the heart, there may be inward peace and happiness without these things; but when men forget God, are false to their covenant engagements, and thereby provoke God to forsake them; all earthly things can do little to make them truly happy even in this world, much less in another; *for riches profit not in the day of wrath.*

2. Let us attend to the exhortations and encouragements here given to repentance; a beautiful and instructive description of which we have in v. 12. The heart of man is, if left to itself, like fallow ground, barren, and useless; yet it is capable of cultivation; and when sinful habits are broken off, carnal affections rooted out, and seeds of righteousness sown there, the produce is invaluable. God must be sought unto to make the instituted means of grace effectual to this great end; and then, we have reason to hope, he will *rain righteousness upon us*, increase in us all christian graces, and all worthy dispositions: and when this is the case, (besides the present satisfaction and pleasure arising from these,) there will be a crop of future mercy to be reaped. But let us not forget that it is all mercy; the free gift of God to the righteous, and not what they have merited. Let us then *follow after righteousness*, and shun and dread all iniquity; remembering that the connexion between ploughing wickedness and reaping punishment, is as sure and necessary, as between sowing righteousness and reaping mercy.

3. Let us therefore learn to trace up all our calamities and afflictions to sin, as the procuring cause: this is strongly expressed in v. 15. God had foretold what they should suffer by the Assyrians, and adds, *so shall Bethel do to you.* As if he had said, It is your idolatry at Bethel that brings all these calamities; it is not Shalman, but Bethel, that does this to you. It is one design of afflictive providences, *to bring men's sins to remembrance*, to make us sensible of our great wickedness, or of *the evil of our evil*, as

in the margin, and thus lead us to humiliation, repentance and amendment. Whatever calamities befall us, let us improve them to this purpose; and then, *by these shall our iniquities be purged; and the fruit of all will be to take away sin.*

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## CHAPTER XI.

Which contains an account of Israel's ingratitude to God for his benefits; of his judgments upon them; of his mercy toward them; of Ephraim's falsehood, and Judah's fidelity.

1 **WHEN** Israel [was] a child, *at the beginning of their state, in the days of their patriarchs, when they kept clear of idolatry,* then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt; *brought them out from Egypt by my divine power; this God did literally, and the phrase became proverbial, for delivering them from imminent dangers, and showing them extraordinary favours; and in this sense it is applied to Christ, (Matt. ii. 15.)* 2 [As] they, *Moses and Aaron,* called them, so they went from them: they sacrificed unto Baalim, and burned incense to graven images; *they early began their idolatry, even in the wilderness.* 3 I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms, *like a tender mother, leading them through the wilderness with great care,* but they knew not that I healed them; *they ascribed their deliverance to other instruments, and not to me.* 4 I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love; *by a kind and gentle conduct, suited to human nature, and adapted to work upon it; or, as in the Chaldee, as beloved children are drawn, I drew them by the strength of love: and I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them; like those who take off the yoke of oxen and give them food: that is, I took the most tender care of them, and led them on to Canaan.*

5 He shall not return into the land of Egypt, but the Assyrian shall be his king, because they refused to return; *though he lay schemes for going to Egypt, he shall not be able to do it, but shall be carried captive into Assyria; that is, into a worse slavery than that of their ancestors in Egypt, farther from home, and from whence he is not so likely to return.* 6 And the sword shall abide on his cities, and shall consume his branches, or bars, *their strong*

*fortifications*, and devour [them,] because of their own counsels. 7 And my people are bent to backsliding from me: though they, *the prophets*, called them to the most High, none at all would exalt [him:] *few or none honoured him by their obedience* \*.

8 How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? [how] shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? [how] shall I set thee as Zeboim? *so that thou shouldst be no more a people?* mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together.

9 I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim, *but I will remember my covenant*: for I [am] God, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee: and I will not enter into the city; *that is, I will not return like an inveterate enemy, who, having conquered a city, comes a second time utterly to destroy those that are left in it.* 10 They shall walk after the LORD; *referring to their final recovery*: he shall roar like a lion; *call with a mighty voice*: when he shall roar, then the children shall tremble from the west; *they shall fly with a hasty fluttering motion, and God will bring them to humiliation and repentance*; and 11 They shall tremble, *or hasten*, as a bird out of Egypt, and as a dove out of the land of Assyria: and I will place them in their houses, saith the LORD: *they shall be restored from those countries in the latter day, and from all places where they have been oppressed, and be fixed in their own land.*

12 Ephraim compasseth me about with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit; *they still persist in their idolatry and wickedness, notwithstanding their fair promises*: but Judah yet ruleth with God, and is faithful with the saints; *probably referring to Hezekiah's reformation: that is, Judah continues its allegiance to the house of David, and the true worship of God, therefore they shall be delivered from their enemies, and their kingdom shall be prolonged; or, (as Bp. Newcome translates it,) 'Hereafter they shall come down a people of God, even a faithful people of saints.'*

## REFLECTIONS.

1. WE here see the method by which God generally leads men to obedience, and their perverseness in refusing it. *He draws them with the cords of a man, and the bands of love, v. 4., in a rational, gentle manner, and by every thing kind and encouraging;*

\* Perhaps this may refer to Hezekiah's inviting them to come and keep the passover at Jerusalem, which the king and governors of Israel opposed.



that is, by means suited to the divine benignity and the nature of man. Thus he deals with us, and it is ungrateful and base to resist his gracious influences; and thus we should deal with one another.

2. God's past kindness aggravates our ingratitude. He reminds Israel of his kindness to them, when they were first formed into a people; of their deliverance from Egypt, their being led through the wilderness, and brought to Canaan: notwithstanding which, they despised his prophets and were bent to backsliding and idolatry. Let us think of God's kindness to us in our youth; of his preserving, supplying, and healing us; especially of our religious advantages: that it may show our ingratitude in forgetting and forsaking him to be exceedingly sinful, and lead us to repent, and walk humbly with God.

3. Let us reflect on the astonishing patience and mercy of God to a sinful people. The eighth verse is a most surprising passage. *How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together.* It is enough, one would think, to melt the most obdurate heart. Justice seemed to require that they should be given up; but mercy pleaded for them, though it scarcely knew how to do it. God here represents himself as a tender father, struggling with himself whether he should disinherit and give up a rebellious son, or not. This is doubtless only described after the manner of men, to exalt the divine mercy, and encourage sinners to repentance. Let us reflect on this most amazing mercy of the most High, and take encouragement from it; for *who is a God like unto ours, pardoning iniquity, transgression, and sin.*

4. It is a great honour to continue steady and faithful, when others deal deceitfully. It is our duty to be *faithful with the saints*, to keep close to God's holy rules and ways, though they are neglected by others; to walk with saints, though they are few and despised. Many, like Ephraim, attend the worship of God deceitfully; hear the word, and commend it, but will not do it; they promise fair, but never perform. This is *lying to God*; and *all liars*, (especially such as these,) *shall have their portion in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone.* But the faithful shall have favour with God, and much comfort; and their works shall be found to *praise, and honour, and glory, at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.*

## CHAPTER XII.

Contains a reproof of Ephraim, Judah, and Jacob; and an exhortation to repentance.

1 **EPHRAIM** feedeth on wind, *he is disappointed*, and followeth after the east wind; *a scorching, blasting wind; he takes pains for what is not only unprofitable, but mischievous*: he daily increaseth lies and desolation; and they do make a covenant with the Assyrians, and oil, *or perfumed garments*, is carried into Egypt, *to engage the Egyptians on their side when they were meditating a rebellion against the Assyrians.* 2 The LORD hath also a controversy with Judah, and will punish Jacob according to his ways; according to his doings will he recompense him; *that is, his posterity.*

3 He took his brother by the heel in the womb, *an emblem of his supplanting him and gaining the birthright*, and by his strength he had power with God, *when wrestling with the angel*, (Gen. xxv. 26.), 4 Yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto him; *in a kind of transport, he laid hold upon him, and wept, and made supplication, till he obtained the blessing*: he found him [in] Beth-el, *where he had an extraordinary dream*, and there he spake with us; *or, with him; that is, he promised to be a God to him and his seed, and to give them that land; and it is an aggravation of their wickedness that there they set up an idol*; 5 Even the LORD God of hosts; the LORD [is] his memorial; *which seems to be added, that God's condescension might not countenance their impieties. Remember that he is the eternal Jehovah, the Lord of hosts, and opposed to all idols.* 6 Therefore turn thou to thy God: keep mercy and judgment, and wait on thy God continually: *then you may expect his favour, and that he will fulfil the promises made to your fathers. But instead of this,*

7 [He is] a merchant, the balances of deceit [are] in his hand: he loveth to oppress; *like a deceitful merchant, you make a trade of cheating; and instead of mercy, you delight in nothing but oppression.* 8 And Ephraim said, Yet I am become rich, I have found me out substance: [in] all my labours they shall find none iniquity in me that [were] sin; *nothing very shameful and*

*criminal; there may be some little trading frauds, but nothing to ruin my character and bring judgments upon me.* 9 And I [that am] the LORD thy God from the land of Egypt will yet make thee to dwell in tabernacles, as in the days of the solemn feasts; *as securely and cheerfully in all thy habitations, as ever thou didst in the days of the solemn feast of tabernacles.* 10 I have also spoken by the prophets, and I have multiplied visions, and used similitudes, by the ministry of the prophets, *yet you have used them ill.* 11 [Is there] iniquity [in] Gilead, *that fruitful and pleasant country? surely they are vanity; your calves, and all your worship there, will deceive you in all your expectations from them:* they sacrifice bullocks in Gilgal; yea, their altars [are] *as many as heaps of stones* in the furrows of the field. 12 And Jacob fled into the country of Syria, and Israel served for a wife, and for a wife he kept [sheep;] *considering my kindness to your ancestors, and their low beginnings, you should not be proud, but submissive and obedient.* 13 And by a prophet the LORD brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet was he preserved; *that is, by Moses and Joshua, when otherwise they would have been crushed and ruined.* Yet notwithstanding this, 14 Ephraim provoked [him] to anger most bitterly: therefore shall he leave his blood upon him, *the blood which he has shed shall return on his own head,* and his reproach shall his LORD return unto him; *as he hath brought a reproach upon religion, by his scandalous behaviour, it shall end in his own reproach among the heathen.*

## REFLECTIONS.

1. WE may hence learn, that those who increase lies, increase desolation to themselves. This wicked people prevaricated with God, and therefore, no wonder that they should be false to men. After their treaty with the king of Assyria they confederated with Egypt against him. It is very displeasing to God to be false in our bargains and covenants with men; much more so to deal treacherously with him: and it will end in shame, disappointment, and misery. To be sincere with God, and honest with men, is the best policy, and absolutely necessary if we would escape everlasting desolation.

2. The kindness of God to our ancestors, is an encouragement to repentance and obedience. Israel is reminded of God's kindnesses to Jacob, that they might first turn to God, then live

suitably, *keep mercy and judgment*, and wait upon God continually for strength to do it. The success of Jacob's prayer is an encouragement to us; *He never said to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye my face in vain.* Those who are raised to wealth and honour from low beginnings, are much indebted to the goodness of God, and ought to be humble, devout, and charitable.

3. It is common for men to think those methods innocent by which they get gain. The character of Ephraim is, it may be feared, applicable to many merchants and tradesmen, I had almost said, to most. They use artful tricks to get money; oppress their servants and workmen; and because they prosper, they think God is not displeased with their conduct. 'We use no frauds but what are customary, and almost inevitable in the way of trade; and therefore God will not lay injustice to our charge.' Thus they stupify their consciences, and reason against the plainest commands and threatenings of God's word. But he has an eye upon our weights and measures; and if we oppress others, and defraud them, especially under colour of justice; though we should become rich and find out substance, we shall lose our souls; for *the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*

4. The reproaches which sinners have brought upon religion, will turn upon themselves: they dishonour God and his ways, and therefore shame will fall upon them; they will see the folly and wickedness of their conduct, and God will bring everlasting contempt upon them: for thus he hath declared, *them that honour me I will honour, but they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.*

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## CHAPTER XIII.

A prophecy of the glory of Ephraim being destroyed by reason of idolatry; of God's anger for their unkindness; a promise of his mercy; and a judgment for rebellion. Ephraim is here supposed to refer to the tribe of Ephraim, as distinguished from Israel; it was the next tribe to Judah for power before its revolt.

1 **WHEN** Ephraim spake trembling, he exalted himself in Israel; *when he behaved with modesty and diffidence, attending to my words, and was contrite, then he was great; but when he offended in Baal, he died; when he became idolatrous, though yet alive, he*

*was like a criminal under sentence of death.* 2 And now they sin more and more, and have made them molten images of their silver, [and] idols according to their own understanding, all of it the work of the craftsmen: they say of them, *or, to them,* Let the men that sacrifice kiss the calves\*; *whosoever comes to worship God, let him adore and show reverence to the calves.* 3 Therefore they shall be as the morning cloud, and as the early dew that passeth away, as the chaff [that] is driven with the whirlwind out of the floor, and as the smoke out of the chimney; *as their goodness had been, so in like manner they also shall quickly disappear.*

4 Yet I [am] the LORD thy God from the land of Egypt, and thou shalt know no God but me: for [there is] no saviour besides me. 5 I did know thee in the wilderness, in the land of great drought; *I took thee under my care, and showed thee a gracious regard.* 6 According to their pastures, so were they filled; *they were plentifully filled in Canaan;* they were filled and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten me. 7 Therefore I will be unto them as a lion; as a leopard by the way will I observe [them.] I will meet them as a bear [that is] bereaved [of her whelps,] and will rend the caul of their heart, and there will I devour them like a lion: the wild beast shall tear them.

9 O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me [is] thine help†; 10 I will be thy king; *or, Where is thy king? Hoshea, their last king, being now imprisoned by the Assyrians: where [is any other] that may save thee in all thy cities? and thy judges of whom thou saidst, Give me a king and princes? officers to attend me.* 11 I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took [him] away in my wrath; *referring to Saul, and perhaps also to later kings, particularly Hoshea.* 12 The iniquity of Ephraim [is] bound up; his sin [is] hid; *rather, sealed up, to be punctually produced at the day of account.* 13 The sorrows of a travailing woman shall come upon him: he [is] an unwise son; for he should not stay long in [the place of] the breaking forth of children: *if a child had reason, it would not continue long in the birth, but endeavour to free itself as soon as possible; but Ephraim showed their folly because they had not hastened to reform and return to God, and so prevent their destruction; but were as it were strangled in the birth.—Then follows a very sublime passage, containing pur-*

\* It was customary for idolaters to kiss their idols. Some ancient writers mention a statue, whose hand was almost worn away by the kisses of its worshippers: from hence comes the word *adoration*.

† Bp. Newcome translates the ninth verse thus; *I have destroyed thee, O Israel, for who will help thee?*

*poses of mercy.* 14 I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction; *though a dreadful havoc shall be made in your country, I will put a stop to it, and destroy the destroyers\**: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes; *I will not alter my purpose.*

15 Though he be fruitful among [his] brethren, an east wind shall come, that is, *the Assyrians, from the east*, the wind of the LORD shall come up from the wilderness, and his spring shall become dry, and his fountain shall be dried up: he shall spoil the treasure of all pleasant vessels; *though Ephraim, (which signifies fruitful,) abound in multitudes of people, and all other outward enjoyments, more than the rest of the tribes.* 16 Samaria shall become desolate; for she hath rebelled against her God: they shall fall by the sword: their infants shall be dashed in pieces, and their women with child shall be ripped up.

### REFLECTIONS.

1. SEE how greatly and justly God resents the pride of his favoured people. When Ephraim was humble, and feared God, then was he exalted; but when he was full, and his heart was exalted, he then became contemptible. Thus, men in low circumstances are often humble and much respected; but when their fortunes are advanced, they think every body else, (and even religion itself,) beneath them; and then they become an abomination to the Lord, and the end of their pride will be destruction.

2. The destruction of sinners is of themselves, and their salvation of God. This is applicable to the case of men in general; *they have destroyed themselves*; the blame lies upon themselves only; God has not been accessory to it. But when they are converted and saved, it is the Lord's work. He only can do it, and he will, if they properly seek him. Let awakened sinners lament their own folly, and *seek their help in God.*

3. God often punishes the inordinate desires of men by granting them. Nothing would serve Ephraim but a king, and God in his anger gave them one; for they suffered by their first king, and by all the kings of the ten tribes. So when men are greedy of honour and gain, God may gratify their wishes in judgment; and

\* The apostle applies this to the general resurrection; though here it is figuratively used for their future national happiness.

what they set their hearts upon may issue in their disappointment and vexation. Let us therefore moderate our desires, and submit them all to the providence of God.

4. Let us rejoice in the prospect of a glorious resurrection. Whatever inferior event these sublime words may refer to, they may undoubtedly be applied to the resurrection of the saints; and perhaps are to be so applied in their primary sense. God has ransomed them by the blood of his Son; who died, rose again, and revived for that purpose; and he shall conquer death, their conqueror, and destroy the grave, their destroyer. Let us labour to secure this resurrection; and rejoice in hope of complete victory over the last enemy: that we may join with all the ransomed of the Lord, in saying, *Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory.*

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## CHAPTER XIV.

Contains an exhortation to repentance, and a promise of God's blessing.

This chapter probably refers to the latter day, when this exhortation shall be complied with by the Jews as a nation.

1 **O** ISRAEL, return unto the LORD thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity; *thou hast brought ruin on thyself by thy sins.* 2 Take with you words, and turn to the LORD; say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive [us] graciously; or, *let us receive good:* so will we render the calves of our lips; *the sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving, which will be more pleasing to thee than calves and bullocks.* 3 Asshur shall not save us; *we will no longer seek the alliance of the Assyrians;* we will not ride upon horses; *will not trust in forbidden means, or in our connexion with Egypt;* neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, [Ye are] our gods; *we will renounce all idolatrous dependances:* for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy; *like poor, helpless orphans, we will seek assistance from thee only.*

Then 4 I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely, or *cheerfully:* for mine anger is turned away from him; *I will not remember their former offences.* 5 I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon; *I will pour out my Spirit in its gracious influences, and they shall be strong and vigorous as a people.* 6 His branches shall

spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as the *frankincense of Lebanon*. 7 They that dwell under his shadow shall return; *or, they shall return and dwell under his shadow*; they shall revive [as] the corn, *that looks dead in the winter and revives in the spring*, and shall grow as the wine: the scent thereof, *the memorial, or wine offering*, [shall be] as the wine of Lebanon; *their services shall be pleasing and acceptable to me\**. 8 Ephraim [shall say,] What have I to do any more with idols? *avowing his strong resolution to give them up, and his thorough abhorrence of them*: I have heard [him] *speaking*, and observed him: I [am] like a green fir tree; *in a thriving, flourishing condition*. From me [is] thy fruit found; *all thy vigour and fruitfulness is owing to my favour and blessing*. 9 Who [is] wise, and he shall understand these [things:] prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the LORD [are] right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein. *The prophet concludes with an important reflection, applicable to divine revelation in general, viz., that wise and good men will justify the wisdom, equity, and goodness of the revelation; but those that are perverse will find some things to object against, and so it will prove their fall and ruin.*

### REFLECTIONS.

1. WE are here shown the nature of repentance, and the encouragements we have to it: it is *returning to God*, from whom we had fallen and backslidden; renouncing every sin, even the most favourite ones; yea, casting them away with the utmost detestation, attended with ardent vows of persevering obedience. The encouragement to this is gracious and wonderful: God will pardon our sins, heal our spiritual disorders, *love us freely*, and give us the best and most delightful tokens of his favourable acceptance. Let us therefore take with us such penitent words, *and hope in the mercy of the Lord; for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up.*

2. See the necessity and happy effects of divine influences. When God is *as the dew* to his people, and pours out his Spirit, their souls grow in knowledge, holiness, comfort, and usefulness; they become strong in religion; they appear amiable in the eyes of all good people, and are real blessings to all about them. Let

\* Pliny mentions a town near Lebanon which was famous for wine; and Maundrel says, it produces the richest and finest in the world.



us constantly depend upon and earnestly pray for these influences; that all these beautiful allusions may be exemplified in us; and that our fruit, which is derived from God, may continually abound to his glory.

3. Wise and upright men will cheerfully submit to divine truths and dispensations: a most important remark, with which Hosea shuts up his prophecy. When men quarrel with the word, or with the providence of God, the fault is in themselves, not in the bible or in divine dispensations. Prudent and wise men are satisfied with the reasonableness of God's laws, and the equity of his providence. Transgressors think they are unreasonable, severe, and unkind; and so are led into sin and ruin: this is the consequence of indulging a perverse and conceited spirit. It is necessary, therefore, that we diligently study the word and providence of God, that we may become wise and prudent; then, while others fail in God's ways, we shall continue to walk in them, find them ways of pleasantness, and be led by them to everlasting life.

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THE BOOK OF  
THE PROPHET JOEL.

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INTRODUCTION.

It is uncertain at what period this prophet wrote; perhaps after the kingdom of Israel was destroyed, and not long before the subversion of Judah\*. He foretells those calamities which were hastening forward; calls the people to repentance; promises temporal and eternal rewards to the penitent; the restoration of the kingdom of Israel, and the ruin of its adversaries.

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CHAPTER I.

This prophecy begins with a threatening of the desolation of Jerusalem and Judah by swarms of locusts; together with excessive heat and drought, whereby their herds and flocks should be almost ready to perish for want of water.

1 **T**HE word of the LORD that came to Joel the son of Pethuel. 2 Hear this, ye old men, and give ear, all ye inhabitants of the land. Hath this been in your days, or even in the days of your fathers? *Is not the calamity with which I now threaten you unparalleled? have the oldest of you ever heard of any thing like it?* 3 Tell ye your children of it, and [let] your children [tell] their children, and their children another generation, *as a most wonderful event, and as a warning to avoid your sins.* 4 That which the palmer worm hath left, hath the locust eaten; and that which the locust hath left, hath the canker worm eaten; and that which the canker worm hath left, hath the caterpillar eaten †. 5 Awake, ye drunkards, and weep; and howl, all ye drinkers of wine, because of the new wine; for it is cut off from your mouth;

\* Bp. Newcome supposes that he prophesied under the long reign of Manassch, from about 697 to 660 before Christ.

† Every country hath its peculiar insects; it is not easy to say what these were. Probably different species of locusts are here described, which, succeeding one another, should eat up all their vegetables; a terrible drought might occasion their becoming so numerous.

*you may justly consider this as the vengeance of God for your abuse of his bounty.* 6 For a nation is come up upon my land, *that is, a vast swarm of locusts, poetically called a nation;* strong, and without number, whose teeth [are] the teeth of a lion, and he hath the cheek teeth of a great lion; *they are as voracious, and as able to devour.* 7 He hath laid my vine waste, and barked my fig tree: he hath made it clean bare, and cast [it] away; the branches thereof are made white\*.

8 Lament like a virgin girded with sackcloth, *that is, in deep mourning,* for the husband of her youth, *snatched away after espousals, and just before marriage.* 9 The meat offering, and the drink offering, *that is, the offering of flour and wine which accompanied the sacrifices,* is cut off from the house of the LORD; the priests, the LORD'S ministers, mourn. 10 The field is wasted, the land mourneth; for the corn is wasted: the new wine is dried up, the oil languisheth; *every thing wears a mournful appearance.* 11 Be ye ashamed, O ye husbandmen; howl, O ye vine-dressers, for the wheat and for the barley; because the harvest of the field is perished; *all your expectations are disappointed by this divine judgment.* 12 The vine is dried up, and the fig tree languisheth; the pomegranate tree, the palm tree also, and the apple tree, [even] all the trees of the field, are withered: because joy, *that is, the joy of harvest,* is withered away from the sons of men. 13 Gird yourselves with sackcloth, and lament, ye priests: howl, ye ministers of the altar: come lie all night in sackcloth, ye ministers of my God, *who keep watch in the temple:* for the meat offering and the drink offering is withholden from the house of your God; *there are neither offerings for the altar, nor maintenance for yourselves.*

14 Sanctify ye a fast, call a solemn assembly, gather the elders [and] all the inhabitants of the land [into] the house of the LORD your God, and cry unto the LORD, 15 Alas for the day! for the day of the LORD [is] at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come; *that is, another and more dreadful day shall shortly come; referring to their destruction by the Chaldeans, which happened a little time after.* 16 Is not the meat cut off before our eyes, [yea,] joy and gladness from the house of our God? *that is, both from our own houses and the temple: and this is likely to continue;* for 17 The seed [is] rotten under their clods, the garners are laid desolate, the barns are broken down;

\* This, travellers assure us, is sometimes done by locusts when very numerous. See HARMER'S *Observ.* vol. i. p. 388.

for the corn is withered. 18 How do the beasts groan? the herds of cattle are perplexed, because they have no pasture; yea, the flocks of sheep are made desolate, *or destroyed*. 19 O LORD, to thee will I cry: for the fire, *that is, a scorching heat, and long continued drought*, hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness, *the level country, the downs and pasture lands which were not tilled*, and the flame hath burned all the trees of the field. 20 The beasts of the field cry also unto thee; *toss up their heads, and roar, or pant and groan, for want of food and water; which in effect was crying to God, who alone could help them; and was a reproof to those who, in this desolation, did not cry unto him: for the rivers of waters are dried up, and the fire hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness.*

### REFLECTIONS.

1. WE have the greatest reason to be thankful that such terrible calamities as are here described are not felt in our country. Observe how terrible God's judgments are; what desolation he can make in a land by the most contemptible creatures: he can bring them as an army, as a nation, and make them as destructive as lions, when he pleaseth to humble a rebellious people. Justly have we deserved this, for our luxury, drunkenness, and abuse of plenty. Let us therefore praise him that our land still yields its increase, and that the joy of harvest is not taken from us.

2. See the design of God's judgments, namely, to bring men to humiliation, repentance, and supplication. When he *turns a fruitful land into barrenness, it is for the iniquity of those that dwell therein*; and it becomes them to humble themselves under his mighty hand. And in what manner soever he corrects us as individuals, whether it be in our persons, our families, or our circumstances, it is our duty to submit to him, to humble ourselves before him; and to cry to him with importunity for pardon and help. And whatever afflictions we escape, and though no days of darkness should in this life come upon us, yet *the day of the Lord is at hand*; that awful day, when *destruction from the Almighty shall come upon the wicked*. Let us give diligence to prepare for that day; that it may not come upon us unawares, but be the day of our complete salvation.

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## CHAPTER II.

Contains a declaration of the terribleness of God's judgments; the prophet's exhortation to repentance; a fast is prescribed, and a blessing promised thereon.

1 **B**LLOW ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD, *that is, a terrible army of locusts*, cometh upon them, for [it is] nigh at hand; 2 A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains; *the locusts shall be as numerous as the rays of light, and shall cover the mountains instead of the beams of the sun*: a great people and a strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, [even] to the years of many generations; *a proverbial expression, signifying their great number, and the uncommon devastation which the locusts should make*. 3 A fire devoureth before them; and behind them a flame burneth: the land [is] as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; yea, and nothing shall escape them; *they shall devour every thing so quickly and entirely, that one would think a fire had done it*. 4 The appearance of them [is] as the appearance of horses, *as the head of a locust is very much like that of a horse*; and as horsemen, so shall they run: *they shall overrun the country with the speed of horsemen, when suddenly invading an enemy's land*. 5 Like the noise of chariots on the tops of mountains shall they leap, like the noise of a flame of fire that devoureth the stubble, as a strong people set in battle array\*. 6 Before their face the people shall be much pained: all faces shall gather blackness; *they shall look ghastly, like dying persons, through their dreadful astonishment and apprehension*. 7 They shall run like mighty men; they shall climb the wall like men of war; and they shall march every one on his ways, and they shall not break their ranks: 8 Neither shall one thrust another; they shall walk every one in his path: *they are said to keep their rank in flight with great exactness*: and [when] they fall upon the sword, they shall not be wounded; *their skin being*

\* Locusts are remarkable for making a loud noise as they fly.

*smooth and hard, and not easily pierced.* 9 They shall run to and fro in the city; they shall run upon the wall, they shall climb up upon the houses; they shall enter in at the windows like a thief, *and thus be extremely troublesome and afflictive to the inhabitants.* 10 The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble; *a strong expression for universal consternation:* the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining; *in such vast and thick swarms shall they come:* 11 And the LORD shall utter his voice before his army, *like a general, commanding and encouraging them:* for his camp [is] very great: for [he is] strong that executeth his word: for the day of the LORD [is] great and very terrible; and who can abide it?

12 Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye [even] to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: 13 And rend your heart, and not your garments, *or, rather than your garments, the latter will be of no avail without the former;* and turn unto the LORD your God *with the deepest contrition:* for he [is] gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil. 14 Who knoweth [if] he will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him; [even] a meat offering and a drink offering unto the LORD your God? *reserve some of the fruits of the earth from the common destruction, for your support and his own worship.*

15 Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly: 16 Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children, and those that suck the breasts, *that ye may appear so much the more objects of divine compassion:* let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet; *lay aside all carnal delights and ornaments, and unite in deprecating the impending judgments of God.* 17 Let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep between the porch and the altar, *the place where they generally stood,* and let them say, Spare thy people, O LORD, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them, *or, use a by-word against them, in scorn and derision, as if their God had forsaken them:* wherefore should they say among the people, Where [is] their God?

18 Then will the LORD be jealous for *the honour of* his land, and pity his people. 19 Yea, the LORD will answer and say unto his people, Behold, I will send you corn, and wine, and oil, and ye shall be satisfied therewith: and I will no more make you a reproach among the heathen: 20 But I will remove far off from

you the northern [army,] *the locusts which came from the north,* and will drive him into a land barren and desolate, *to the deserts of Arabia,* with his face toward the east sea, and his hinder part toward the utmost sea; *those on the eastern side I will send into the eastern or dead sea, and the western swarm I will destroy in the western or Mediterranean sea; from whence being driven back by the waves on the shore, they will become noisome and offensive;* and his stink shall come up, and his ill savour shall come up, because he, *that is, Jehovah,* hath done great things.

21 Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice: for the LORD will do great things: *a beautiful contrast! the Lord will do great things in mercy, as he hath done great things in judgment.* 22 Be not afraid, ye beasts of the field, *who have cried to God by your moans:* for the pastures of the wilderness do spring, for the tree beareth her fruit, the fig tree and the vine do yield their strength, *large and vigorous crops.* 23 Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God: for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first [month.] 24 And the floors shall be full of wheat, and the fats shall overflow with wine and oil. 25 And I will restore to you *the produce* of the years that the locusts hath eaten, the canker worm, and the caterpillar, and the palmer worm, my great army which I sent among you. 26 And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the LORD your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you: and my people shall never be ashamed; *they shall no longer be reproached by the heathen.* 27 And ye shall know that I [am] in the midst of Israel, and [that] I [am] the LORD your God, and none else: and my people shall never be ashamed.

28 And it shall come to pass afterward, [that] I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions; *which St. Peter applies to the descent of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, (Acts ii. 17.,) when God revealed to young and old his truths, purposes, and commands:* 29 And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids, *upon the lowest orders and ranks of men,* in those days will I pour out my spirit. 30 And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. 31 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come; *referring to the dreadful wars in*

*Judea, when many cities were laid waste, and pillars of smoke went up from their ruins\**. 32 And it shall come to pass, [that] who-soever shall call on the name of the LORD, *that is, whosoever shall heartily embrace the gospel*, shall be delivered from temporal and eternal judgments: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said by former prophets, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call; *that is, the remnant of the Jews who embrace the gospel, when the bulk of the nation reject it.*

### REFLECTIONS.

1. WE have here an awful yet glorious display of divine power. The locusts are God's army, a great army, marshalled, ordered, and directed by him: they come when he pleases, do what he commands, and retreat when he bids them: all creatures, even the meanest insects, execute his will. Who would not therefore fear this great and glorious Being! for *who can abide his great and terrible day?*

2. The hope of divine mercy is a great encouragement to repentance and prayer. The prophet called his people to these, though on a peradventure only; *who knoweth if he will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him; even a meat offering and a drink offering unto the Lord your God; v. 14.* This refers to temporal judgments, and is applicable to afflictions in general: humiliation and prayer are the most likely means of removing any calamity, though we cannot tell how far they will prevail. Real and final judgments we may be assured they will avert: but let us remember that they must be sincere and affectionate; *we must rend the heart, and not the garments only.* It is *godly sorrow that worketh repentance unto salvation, and the fervent prayer, that availeth.*

3. Let us be thankful that our country is not liable to these terrible scourges. God deals wonderfully with us in the plentiful products of every returning year; and they should lead our hearts to him in love and thankfulness.

4. Let us especially rejoice in the pouring out of the holy Spirit, and pray that we may be partakers of his gracious influences. It was at first miraculously poured out on the apostles, and through them, on all the disciples, young and old, male and

\* Our Lord describes the destruction of Jerusalem under these images, Matt. xxiv. 19, &c.



female, rich and poor; and this contributed much to the spread and establishment of the gospel. We also have encouragement to hope for the same Spirit, though not in so extraordinary a manner, if we *call on the name of the Lord* with humble faith, and in the practice of evangelical obedience. Even the servant and handmaid may have a supply of this Spirit, if they earnestly seek it. And by this shall we all be led to holiness here, and to complete and everlasting happiness in the new Jerusalem.

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### CHAPTER III.

This chapter refers to some things yet to be accomplished; such as the conversion of the Jews to christianity in the latter days; of the Messiah's kingdom, and the destruction of some enemies that will confederate against them, after their return to their own land.

1 **F**OR, behold, in those days, and in that time, when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem; *not only a small remnant, but the whole nation;* 2 I will also gather all the *neighbouring nations who are their enemies*, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, *or, to a place of divine judicature, as the name signifies*, and will plead with them there for my people and [for] my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land; *I will vindicate my people's cause, convince their enemies of their wickedness, and execute my righteous judgments upon them.* 3 And they have cast lots for my people, *an instance both of their cruelty and contempt;* and have given a boy for a harlot, *a jewish boy for the hire of an harlot*, and sold a girl for wine, that they might drink *to excess.* 4 Yea, and what have ye to do with me, O Tyre, and Zidon, and all the coasts of Palestine\*? *O Tyre and Zidon, what have my people done to you, that you should assist their enemies? and, ye Philistines, will ye render me a recompence? and if ye recompense me, swiftly [and] speedily will I return your recompence upon your own head; Do ye remember the former calamities which I have brought upon you? and will ye revenge them upon my people? if ye do so, ye shall*

\* This does not refer to the same event; it is a digression to ver. 9., and foretells their approaching destruction by Alexander, as a specimen of the future final destruction of the enemies of the church.

*find how swiftly and speedily I will be revenged upon you.* 5 Because ye have taken my silver and my gold, and have carried into your temples my goodly pleasant things; *not only the ark formerly, but the plunder of the temple and city:* 6 The children also of Judah and the children of Jerusalem have ye sold unto the Grecians, that ye might remove them far from their border\*. 7 Behold, I will raise them, *that is, their posterity,* out of the place whither ye have sold them, and will return your recompence upon your own heads†: 8 And I will sell your sons and your daughters into the hand of the children of Judah, and they shall sell them to the Sabeans, to a people far off; for the LORD hath spoken [it ‡.] 9 Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles; Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up; *ironically encouraging them to oppose the design of Providence:* 10 Beat your ploughshares into swords, and your pruning hooks into spears; let the weak say, I [am] strong; *get all possible weapons, make all possible efforts: let even the unwarlike arm themselves on this occasion.* 11 Assemble yourselves and come, all ye heathen, and gather yourselves together round about: thither cause thy mighty ones, *the angels,* to come down *and destroy them,* O LORD. 12 Let the heathen be wakened, *let their courage be roused,* and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about. *And I will say to the angels,* 13 Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the press is full, the fats overflow; for their wickedness [is] great; *they are ripe for destruction* §. 14 Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the LORD [is] near in the valley of decision; *great multitudes shall be destroyed in that appointed valley, where God will decide the controversy between his people and their enemies.* 15 The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining. 16 The LORD also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the LORD [will be] the hope of his people, and the strength of the children

\* The Tyrians dealt with the Grecians in slaves, as we find in Ezekiel xxvii. 13., and history mentions many thousand Jews being sold for slaves at different times.

† Accordingly, Alexander sold thirty thousand Tyrians for slaves.

‡ As Alexander showed particular favour to the Jews, he might probably sell them many Tyrian slaves, and they might sell them to the Sabeans, or Arabians, from whom they had their incense. This power of the Jews over the neighbouring nations, was to be an emblem of their triumph over them in the latter day, to which the prophet then returns.

§ The destruction of the antichristian army is spoken of in like terms, Rev. xiv. 15, 18.

of Israel; *there shall be dreadful convulsions and revolutions among the vanquished nations: but while he tears and destroys his enemies like a lion, he will protect his people.* 17 So shall ye know, *by the visible effects of my protection, that I [am] the LORD your God dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain: then, when God shall return and dwell with Israel again,* shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more; *she shall no more be polluted or oppressed by unbelievers.*

18 And it shall come to pass in that day, [that] the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, *universal plenty and happiness shall attend you in all your concerns,* and all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters, *there shall be no more drought,* and a fountain shall come forth of the house of the LORD, and shall water the valley of Shittim, *a dry country in the plains of Moab; that is, the gospel shall go forth from Jerusalem, and occasion the most happy changes; like water making a dry valley fruitful.* 19 Egypt shall be a desolation, and Edom shall be a desolate wilderness; *Egypt and Edom are put for the rest of the enemies of the converted Jews, who shall all be destroyed;* for the violence [against] the children of Judah, because they have shed innocent blood in the land. 20 But Judah shall dwell for ever, and Jerusalem from generation to generation; *they shall no more nationally apostatize from God.* 21 For I will cleanse their blood [that] I have not cleansed; *I will cleanse them from all pollution; or rather, this remarkable expression may signify their being forgiven their sin in the death of Christ, whose blood they imprecated upon themselves and their children: for the LORD dwelleth in Zion; that is, he will take up his lasting residence with them.*

## REFLECTIONS.

1. How mad is the opposition which sinners make to God. The nations bordering upon the Jews, are here represented as quarrelling with God for punishing them, and wreaking their revenge upon his people. Such a degree of desperate boldness there is in the hearts of sinners still. When they are afflicted and distressed, they murmur against God, and show their resentment by their rage against his instruments and his cause. *But woe to him that striveth with his Maker! for he will return their recompence on their own heads. None ever hardened himself against God, and prospered.*

2. How vain is all the power of man against the designs of

Providence. Many beautiful images are used to represent the strongest confederacy of a numerous people against the Jews: all weapons, and all arts, were used for their destruction. But the Lord of hosts has ten thousand times ten thousand mighty ones at his command; and if he should send but one of them down, it were sufficient to destroy the most formidable armies, let them come with ever so much rage. We may therefore be confident of the security of the church, and that the schemes of Providence in its favour shall all take place; for *the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.*

3. Whatever commotions there are in the world, God's people shall be safe and easy. When states and kingdoms are in confusion, when the heavens and earth shall shake, (*v. 16.*) he is the object of their hope and trust, and will strengthen their arms, support their courage, and animate their hearts. How desirable, how necessary, then is it to have him for our friend and helper. *Blessed is the man whose trust is in God, and whose hope the Lord is; for he will be the strength of his heart, and his portion for ever.*

4. Let us rejoice in the comfortable declarations which are here made respecting the poor dispersed Jews. This, and many other prophecies foretell their conversion; their being gathered together to their own land; and brought to a state of gospel purity, peace, and happiness; God will cleanse them from the guilt and pollution of blood, even that of Christ, and will be for ever among them. Let the eye of our faith be directed to this happy event: and in the mean time let it be our prayer, that the gospel, like a fountain, may water the dry parts of the Gentile world, and that all Israel may be saved.

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# THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET AMOS.

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## INTRODUCTION.

AMOS was contemporary with Hosea, though it is probable he did not live so long. He was not educated in the schools of the prophets founded by Samuel, but was called to the prophetic office from being a herdsman in Tekoa, in the territory of Judah, and sent to call the people of Israel to repentance. He begins, however, with denouncing judgments against other nations, and concludes with comfortable promises of God's restoring the tabernacle of David, and erecting the Messiah's kingdom. Several of this prophet's images are borrowed from those rural objects, which were familiar to him as a herdsman; his sentiments are frequently lofty, and his style beautiful, though plain; for Isaiah at the court, and Amos at the fold, were inspired by one and the same Spirit. He is generally supposed to have written about the year 787 before the christian era\*.

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## CHAPTER I.

In which Amos foretells God's judgments upon Syria, the Philistines, Tyrus, Edom, and Ammon.

1 **T**HE words of Amos, who was among the herdmen of Tekoa, (*God, in this case, going out of his usual way in the choice of a prophet*), which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel, two years before the earthquake. 2 And he said, the LORD will roar from Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the habitations of the shepherds shall mourn, and the top of Carmel shall wither, *by reason of drought*.

3 Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions, of Damascus, and for four, *that is, for many transgressions*, I will not turn away [the punishment] thereof; because they have threshed, *oppressed and harassed*, Gilead with threshing instruments of iron; *that is,*

\* Dr. Smith.

*planks with iron teeth, which were drawn over the corn.* 4 But I will send a fire, *consuming judgments*, into the house of Hazael, which shall devour the palaces of Benhadad, *his son and successor.* 5 I will break also the bar of Damascus, *will demolish its strength and fortifications*, and cut off the inhabitant from the plain of Aven, *or iniquity*, and him that holdeth the sceptre from the house of Eden, *or, his pleasure house*: and the people of Syria shall go into captivity unto Kir, saith the LORD\*.

6 Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Gaza, and for four, I will not turn away [the punishment] thereof: because they carried away captive the whole captivity, *all they could seize*, to deliver [them] up to Edom; *to sell them for slaves to the Edomites*: 7 But I will send a fire on the wall of Gaza, which shall devour the palaces thereof: 8 And I will cut off the inhabitant from Ashdod, and him that holdeth the sceptre from Ashkelon, and I will turn mine hand against Ekron; and the remnant of the Philistines shall perish, saith the Lord GOD†.

9 Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Tyrus, and for four, I will not turn away [the punishment] thereof: because they delivered up the whole captivity to Edom; *the Edomites did all they could to get the Jews into their custody, that they might exercise cruelty upon them, and bought them of the Philistines and Tyrians*, and remembered not the brotherly covenant; *the league between David, Solomon, and Hiran*, 1 Kings v. 1., ix. 11—13. 10 But I will send a fire on the wall of Tyrus *by Nebuchadnezzar*, Ezck. xxvi. 7—14., which shall devour the palaces thereof.

11 Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Edom, and for four, I will not turn away [the punishment] thereof: because he did pursue his brother with the sword, *they took all occasions to injure and oppress the Israelites, though descended from the brother of Esau their ancestor*, and did cast off all pity, and his anger did tear perpetually, and he kept his wrath for ever: 12 But I will send a fire upon Teman, which shall devour the palaces of Bozrah, *their two principal cities*.

13 Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of the children of Ammon, and for four, I will not turn away [the

\* Accordingly, about fifty years after, they were carried captive by the Assyrians. See 2 Kings xvi. 9.

† Accordingly, after the invasion of the Chaldeans we read no more of the Philistines. But others refer it to Alexander the Great, who took Gaza.—QUIST. CURR. l. iv. 6.

punishment] thereof : because they have ripped up the women with child of Gilead, that they might enlarge their border ; *in order to recover the country which Jephthah had taken from them, they joined the Syrians, and were guilty of the most cruel excursions, destroying both root and branch* : 14 But I will kindle a fire in the wall of Rabbah, *their capital city*, and it shall devour the palaces thereof, with shouting in the day of battle, with a tempest in the day of the whirlwind ; *they shall be overwhelmed by the irresistible judgments of God* : 15 And their king shall go into captivity, he and his princes together, saith the LORD.

### REFLECTIONS.

1. WE are again called upon to observe the sovereignty of God, in making use of what instruments he pleaseth to further his designs. Amos was of a low family, of a mean occupation, not educated at the schools of the prophets ; and yet he was called to the prophetic office. God often chooses *the weak things of this world, and things that are foolish, to confound the wise and the mighty* ; and it becomes us to acquiesce in his choice ; as it is designed to display his power and grace, and to hide pride from man. We must not think to confine him to our rules. Those ministers who have abilities, and endeavour to do good, ought not to be despised on account of their want of education and learned accomplishments ; but to be received with candour and respect. *Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings God can perfect praise.*

2. The chief lesson which is taught in this chapter is, the high displeasure of God against persecution and cruelty. The charge against most of these nations fixes upon these vices. God will sooner or later avenge the ill treatment which his servants have received. Cruelty and malice are always abominable to God, especially when indulged in violation of the brotherly covenant, or against those who ought to be treated with brotherly affection. Too many, like the Edomites, *cast off pity* when once offended, and delight to vex and torment even their nearest relatives ; yea, continue to study revenge, and *keep their wrath for ever*. Let such persons remember, that by this diabolical spirit they kindle the anger of God against themselves ; and that *he shall have judgment without mercy, who showeth no mercy*. It is the glory of the divine nature,

and the happiness of sinful man, that *God doth not always chide, nor retain his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father in heaven is merciful.*

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## CHAPTER II.

In which is declared God's wrath against Moab, upon Judah, and upon Israel; God complains of their unthankfulness.

1 **THUS** saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Moab, and for four, I will not turn away [the punishment] thereof; because he burned the bones of the king of Edom into lime; *a circumstance of cruelty which is not elsewhere recorded, that having slain the king of Edom (if not burned him alive) he made lime of his bones, probably to plaster his house.* 2 But I will send a fire upon Moab, and it shall devour the palaces of Kirioth: and Moab shall die with tumult, with shouting, [and] with the sound of the trumpet: 3 And I will cut off the judge, *or king*, from the midst thereof, and will slay all the princes thereof with him, saith the LORD.

4 Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not turn away [the punishment] thereof; because they have despised the law of the LORD, and have not kept his commandments, and their lies, *their idols and false prophets*, caused them to err, after the which their fathers have walked. 5 But I will send a fire upon Judah, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, *not excepting even the temple.*

6 Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not turn away [the punishment] thereof; because they sold the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes; *they perverted justice for the smallest present; even a pair of shoes or sandals would draw them to act wickedly;* 7 That pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor, *or rather, they bruise the head of the poor in the dust of the earth, that is, trample upon them*, and turn aside the way of the meek; *bring the meek into such circumstances that they know not what way to take:* and a man and his father will go in unto the [same] maid, to profane my holy name; *that is, when an elderly man married a young woman, his son would debauch her:* 8 And they lay [themselves] down upon clothes laid to pledge, *which by the law they ought to restore*, by every altar, *they lie on carpets spread on the ground*



*to feast at their idolatrous altars, and they drink the wine of the condemned [in] the house of their god ; they make feasts with the money which they have got by the fines of those whom they have unjustly condemned.*

9 Yet destroyed I the Amorite before them, *the accursed nations, the sons of Anak, or, the giants*, whose height [was] like the height of the cedars, and he [was] strong as the oaks; yet I destroyed his fruit from above, and his roots from beneath; *utterly destroyed them root and branch, fathers and children, princes and subjects.* 10 Also I brought you up from the land of Egypt, and led you forty years through the wilderness, to possess the land of the Amorite; *another signal instance of my goodness to you.* 11 And I raised up of your sons for prophets *in the ten tribes, to instruct and warn them*, and of your young men for Nazarites, *who were solemnly devoted to God and his service.* [Is it] not even thus, O ye children of Israel? *let your own consciences tell you ; saith the LORD.* 12 But ye gave the Nazarites wine to drink; *debauched and corrupted them by tempting, and perhaps forcing them to act contrary to their vow ;* and commanded the prophets, saying, *Prophecy not ; ye would not bear to have your darling sins reprov'd.* 13 Behold, I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed [that is] full of sheaves; *I am so provoked by your wickedness, that I am quite overborne with it, speaking after the manner of men.* 14 Therefore the flight shall perish from the swift, and the strong shall not strengthen his force, neither shall the mighty deliver himself: 15 Neither shall he stand that handleth the bow; and [he that is] swift of foot shall not deliver [himself:] neither shall he that rideth the horse deliver himself. 16 And [he that is] courageous among the mighty shall flee away naked in that day, saith the LORD; *he shall throw away his armour as an incumbrance to him.*

## REFLECTIONS.

1. WE have before seen how much God is displeas'd with cruelty, and must here add, with oppression and injustice; which is worse than burning men's dead bones to lime. See here how fatal is the influence of the love of money; it is *the root of all evil*; it leads men to trample on the poor, and *sell them for a pair of shoes*. Nothing is too base and mean for men to stoop to, when the love of gain wholly possesses their hearts. These things

are highly displeasing to God; and though the oppressed and wronged are not able to oppose, or dare not; or though the oppressors may evade human laws, yet God will not turn away punishment from such unjust and cruel men.

2. It is a great instance of the goodness of God to us, that the schools of the prophets are continued with us, and our sons taken for his ministers. Many among the Israelites were taken from such schools, to deliver God's messages to them; and are still, though they have no extraordinary inspiration; and it is an honour to the places and families whence they spring. Those seminaries where young men are trained up for sanctuary service, are great blessings to our land: and we shall incur great guilt if we do not improve the ministry of the word, but forbid its preachers to deal faithfully with us, or censure them for doing so.

3. See the aggravated guilt of those who corrupt others. There are too many such in every place, who tempt others to drink to excess, entice them into bad company and public-houses; to the ruin of multitudes who have been devoted to God, and of some too who have devoted themselves to him. Beware of such persons; fly them as you would the plague; and *if sinners entice you, consent ye not.*

4. See the detestable nature of sin, and how offensive it is to an holy God. That is a remarkably strong expression, *I am pressed under you*; as if it grieved him, tired out his patience, and he was unable longer to bear it. Thus does God represent to us his hatred of sin, especially the sins of his professing people: and it ought to fill us with a deep abhorrence of all sin, and make us solicitous and watchful to avoid *that abominable thing which his soul hateth.*

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### CHAPTER III.

In this chapter is shown the necessity of God's judgment against Israel; also the publication and causes of it.

**H**EAR this word that the LORD hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying, 2 You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore, *because you have sinned against greater light and greater obligations, I will punish, or visit, you*

for all your iniquities. 3 Can two walk together, except they be agreed? *there can be no agreeable conversation without friendship, nor can I behave like a friend and benefactor to you, while you break my laws:* 4 Will a lion roar in the forest, when he hath no prey? will a young lion cry out of his den, if he have taken nothing\*? 5 Can a bird fall in a snare upon the earth, where no gin [is] for him? shall [one] take up a snare from the earth, and have taken nothing at all? *or, Will a snare spring from the ground, when it hath not taken any thing? Thus, it is not by chance that sinners fall into destruction, but because God hath made the necessary preparation for it; nor will he remove his judgments till the end is answered.* 6 Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? *shall it not throw them into an alarm?* shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done [it,] *or, inflicted it?* *are not all calamities to be ascribed to the hand of God, and not to chance? he knows and appoints every grievous circumstance.* 7 Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, *or, doeth nothing,* but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets, *that is, to a series of prophets; he hath revealed these things to me, and I to you, for your warning.* 8 The lion hath roared, who will not fear? the Lord GOD hath spoken, who can but prophesy? *God hath given me a commission to denounce his vengeance, and ye ought to hear it with more fear than the roaring of a lion.*

9 Publish in the palaces of Ashdod, and in the palaces in the land of Egypt, *that is, upon the flat roofs of the palaces, the usual place of proclaiming events,* (see Matt. x. 27.,) and say, Assemble yourselves, *ye neighbouring nations,* upon the mountains of Samaria: and behold the great tumults in the midst thereof, and the oppressed in the midst thereof; *be witnesses of God's righteousness and their calamity.* 10 For they know not to do right, saith the LORD, who store up violence and robbery, *the goods gotten by injustice,* in their palaces. 11 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; An adversary [there shall be] even round about the land, *that is, the king of Assyria;* and he shall bring down thy strength from thee, and thy palaces shall be spoiled. 12 Thus saith the LORD; As the shepherd taketh out of the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear; so shall the children of Israel be taken out, *the greatest part of the people shall be destroyed, and but a small remnant left,* that dwell in Samaria in the corner of a bed, and in

\* Alluding here to the noise the lion makes before he rushes on his prey, or to his roaring over it when taken; referring to God's denunciations by his prophets, and intimating that he had something awful to do to his people.

Damascus [in] a couch; *though they hide themselves under beds and couches, or fly to Damascus for shelter, the same judgment shall pursue them.* 13 Hear ye, O ye priests, the words dictated to the prophets, and testify in the house of Jacob, saith the LORD God, the God of hosts, *make proclamation of it among those of the ten tribes, to move them to repentance,* 14 That in the day that I shall visit the transgressions of Israel upon him, I will also visit the altars of Beth-el; *my judgments shall be particularly visible on the places dedicated to idolatry: and the horns of the altar shall be cut off, and fall to the ground; that is, the little square corners, which were raised up like turrets, and into which they poured some of the blood of the sacrifices, these shall be cut off and the altars ruined; so unable shall their idols be to protect their worshippers.* 15 And I will smite the winter house with the summer house; and the houses of ivory, *those houses which were inlaid with it,* shall perish, *shall lie in ruins,* and the great houses shall have an end, saith the LORD; *none of the inhabitants of the land shall rebuild them.*

### REFLECTIONS.

1. WE may observe, that their guilt is greatly aggravated who live in sin, after having received distinguishing favours from God; such as national privileges, pious parents, a good education, providential favours, and, above all, spiritual mercies; who have made a profession of religion, and are under solemn engagements to God. Such shall be remarkably punished, because they offer a greater affront to God, and do a greater injury to religion, than others can do. Privileges will not save the wicked from punishment, but greatly increase it. *To whom much is given, of them much will be required.*

2. Observe the absolute necessity there is of reconciliation to God. Man, as sinful, is at enmity with his Maker; and there can be no friendship or fellowship, till the variance is removed; that is, till the enmity on our part is slain. In order to which, there must be a change in the heart; it must be brought to love God above all, and to desire his favour as the main thing. There can be no comfortable walking with God till we are thus reconciled to him; and this is to be sought through Christ, *who is our peace, and who suffered the just for the unjust, to bring us to God.*

3. See the importance of hearkening to God's voice, whether that be his word, or his rod. The threatenings of his word are

not mere bug-bears, but will surely be fulfilled; and *when there is evil in a city* he gives warning by it. Calamities and afflictions are of his doing, and designed to alarm and rouse men, like the sound of a trumpet, or the roaring of a lion; and when the Lord's voice thus crieth, wise men learn instruction. *Hear ye, therefore, the rod, and who hath appointed it.*

4. If men have been guilty of violence or robbery, the judgments of God will follow them. Though they live in palaces of ivory, strong and beautiful; though they have town and country houses; yet, if built, furnished, or adorned from the spoils of the poor, the gain of oppression, the effects of fraud and covetousness, God will smite them. Their wealth and their glory shall have an end; and the possessors shall be banished from their own houses, and from the house of God above, to that place of torment prepared for the wicked: for *the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*

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## CHAPTER IV.

The three first verses of this chapter are a prophecy against the ladies of Israel, reproving their vices, and threatening them with severe judgments; the latter part is addressed to the people in general.

1 **H**EAR this word, ye kine of Bashan, that [are] in the mountain of Samaria, *who are wanton and luxurious, like cattle in rich pastures, which oppress the poor, which crush the needy, which say to their masters, Bring, and let us drink; whose masters and husbands abet their oppressions, and their perverting of justice, to maintain them in their extravagance.* 2 The Lord God hath sworn by his holiness, that, lo, the days shall come upon you, that he will take you away with hooks, and your posterity with fish hooks; *intimating in what abundance their enemies should take their prey, and how unable they should be to resist.* 3 And ye shall go out at the breaches, every [cow at that which is] before her, *as fat cattle crowding through the first breaches in a fence,* and ye shall cast [them] into the palace, saith the LORD; *or, cast away the things of the palace, the furniture of the palace, and the choicest things of it, as incumbrances.*

4 Come to Beth-el, and transgress; at Gilgal multiply transgression; *at places where the divine favour has been shown to you,*

*but which are now devoted to idolatry; [and] bring your sacrifices every morning, [and] your tithes after three years; those tithes which every third year ought to be brought to Jerusalem, to support the worship of God there, but which are now brought to your idolatrous altars: 5 And offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving with leaven, and proclaim [and] publish the free offerings: for this liketh you, O ye children of Israel, saith the LORD; ye are incorrigible, and therefore shall be given up to your own lusts, and be ruined by your idolatry.*

6 And I also have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and want of bread in all your places; *such a dreadful famine, that there was hardly any thing to eat: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.* 7 And also I have withholden the rain from you, when [there were] yet three months to the harvest; *that is, the latter rain, in February, on which their harvest, which was in May, so much depended: and I caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it not to rain upon another city; perhaps in Judea, but not in Samaria; or, on one city which was more pure from idolatry, but not on others; or, on the fields of the pious only: one piece was rained upon, and the piece whereupon it rained not withered.* 8 So two [or] three cities wandered unto one city, to drink water; but they were not satisfied; *there was not sufficient for them: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.* 9 I have smitten you with blasting and mildew: when your gardens and your vineyards and your fig trees and your olive trees increased, the palmer worm devoured [them:] yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD. 10 I have sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt; *that is, infectious diseases: your young men have I slain with the sword, and have taken away your horses, which were carried away by the enemy, or destroyed by distempers; and I have made the stink of your camps to come up unto your nostrils; through the number of men and beasts which were slain by disease or the sword: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.* 11 I have overthrown [some] of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning; *most of your houses were destroyed, and your towns half burned, and yet those of you that escaped were not suitably impressed by these judgments: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.* 12 Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel; *I will overthrow thee with a still greater overthrow: [and] because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel; do not think to escape me, but prepare to meet*

*me: in arms if thou canst; if not, by humble submission and earnest supplication; remember that I who threaten, am able to execute vengeance:* 13 For, lo, he that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what [is] his thought, that maketh the morning darkness, *that overcasteth the day, or causeth the eclipse of the sun,* and treadeth upon the high places of the earth, *spurns and treads into the dust all those fortresses that you may vainly pride yourselves in,* The LORD, The God of hosts, [is] his name.

### REFLECTIONS.

1. How justly is God displeased with the luxury and extravagance even of women. The prophet here addresses the ladies of Israel in no very courtly strains; but they deserved the severest language. Through idleness and high living, they pampered themselves, like beasts; and thus, to support their extravagance, joined with their husbands in oppression and cruelty. They did not keep within the bounds of reason and decency, and therefore God gave them as a prey to their enemies. How necessary is it for all to guard against luxury and extravagance, if they desire to be just to men, and righteous toward God.

2. Let us learn to observe the hand of God in the calamities of life, and attend to his design in sending them. In how beautiful and instructive a manner is God's providence in afflictive events described in this chapter! He sends famine, withholds rain, or gives it where he pleases; blasts the products of the earth by weather or insects; and sends fire, diseases, and enemies. All are his servants, and his design in all is, to bring back his wandering, revolting creatures to their God and their duty. His aim is merciful; and it becomes us to acknowledge his agency, and submit to him: especially should those do so who have received remarkable deliverances, (being, as it were, *brands plucked out of the burning,*) and whose guilt will be aggravated, if they be not suitably impressed.

3. Let all men prepare *to meet God in the way of his judgments.* A most instructive exhortation, plainly intimating the vanity of attempting to fly from God, or to oppose him. There is no meeting him as an enemy, for *he will overcome:* therefore our wisdom will be to meet him with humble, penitent submission and prayer, considering how vast is his knowledge and his power. He formed those things which are greatest and most stupendous, as the moun-

tains; and created the wind, which is most subtle and powerful in its operations; he knows what is most secret, as men's thoughts; and he can destroy all those things in which sinners place their confidence. Let us then fear this great and glorious Being; humble ourselves before him; and be above all things solicitous that he may be *our God*; then all this knowledge, power, and grandeur will be engaged to promote and secure our felicity.

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## CHAPTER V.

Contains a lamentation for Israel; an exhortation to repentance; and God's rejection of their hypocritical services.

1 **H**EAR ye this word which I take up against you, [even] a lamentation, O house of Israel, *over the dead and dying, and over the kingdom irrecoverably lost.* 2 The virgin of Israel, *so called in allusion to her being espoused to God, she is fallen; she shall no more rise: she is forsaken upon her land; [there is] none to raise her up; she lies like an helpless infant.* 3 For thus saith the LORD GOD; The city that went out [by] a thousand shall leave an hundred, and that which went forth [by] an hundred shall leave ten, to the house of Israel; *so greatly shall the number of soldiers be diminished by slaughter.*

4 For, *or rather, Therefore* thus saith the LORD unto the house of Israel, Seek ye me, and ye shall live: 5 But seek not Beth-el, nor enter into Gilgal, and pass not to Beer-sheba; *do not persist in the idolatries practised in those places, as if you studied to affront God: for Gilgal shall surely go into captivity, and Beth-el shall come to nought.* 6 Seek the LORD, and ye shall live; lest he break out like fire in the house of Joseph, and devour [it,] and [there be] none to quench [it] in Beth-el; *for be assured that no idol or idolatrous services will avail.* 7 Ye who turn judgment to wormwood, and leave off righteousness in the earth, *who make that which should be the support and comfort, to be the abhorrence, of the public.* 8 [Seek him] that maketh the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night: that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth: The LORD [is] his name: *who formed the constellations of heaven, who fixed*



*the revolutions of day and night, and causeth storms and inundations on the earth:* 9 That strengtheneth the spoiled against the strong, so that the spoiled shall come against the fortress and take it. 10 They hate him that rebuketh in the gate, and they abhor him that speaketh uprightly; *wicked oppressors hate active magistrates and faithful prophets.* 11 Forasmuch therefore as your treading [is] upon the poor, and ye take from him burdens of wheat: ye have built houses of hewn stone, but ye shall not dwell in them; ye have planted pleasant vineyards, but ye shall not drink wine of them; *your injustice will bring a curse upon all you have.* 12 For I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins: they afflict the just, they take a bribe, and they turn aside the poor in the gate [from their right.] 13 Therefore the prudent shall keep silence in that time; for it [is] an evil time; *it is in vain, yea unsafe, to reprove you.* 14 Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live: and so the LORD, the God of hosts, shall be with you, as ye have spoken; *as you have boasted of your relation to him and his presence with you.* 15 Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate: it may be that the LORD God of hosts will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph, *who hath been already plundered. Nevertheless, since I foresee that you will not repent,* 16 Therefore the LORD, the God of hosts, the LORD saith thus; Wailing [shall be] in all streets; and they shall say in all the highways, *Alas! alas! their lamentations shall not be confined to houses, but shall be heard every where;* and they shall call the husbandman to mourning, *because he is plundered,* and such as are skilful of lamentation to wailing; *those whose business it is to play mournful tunes and sing sorrowful ditties at funerals, to make the lamentation more solemn.* 17 And in all vineyards, *where there used to be joy,* [shall be] wailing: for I will pass through thee, saith the LORD, *like an invading enemy; or, as I passed through Egypt and left terrible traces of vengeance behind me.* 18 Woe unto you that desire the day of the LORD; *who mock the prophets, and say, we shall be glad to see the day you threatened us with:* to what end [is] it for you? the day of the LORD [is] darkness, and not light; *it will be very different from what you expect.* 19 As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house to escape a storm, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him; *you may hope for relief by a change of circumstances; but every change will be from one calamity to another.* 20 [Shall] not the day of the LORD

[be] darkness, and not light? even very dark, and no brightness in it? *that is, unmixed and continued distress.*

21 I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell *the incense that attends your sacrifices* in your solemn assemblies. 22 Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, *and thus imitate the temple services*, I will not accept [them:] neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols; *all these are abominable while you continue wicked.* 24 But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream; *let there be a general reformation; let the meanest have the benefit of justice, and then your devotions will be pleasing.* 25 Have ye offered unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel? *Israel did not continue free from idolatry even the first forty years after they came out of Egypt.* 26 But *you have improved upon the idolatry of your forefathers*, ye have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chiun your images, *carried about with you a shrine, with the images of the sun and Saturn in it, the star of your God, an Egyptian king, called Remphan, (so Stephen called him from the LXX.,) which ye made to yourselves\*.* 27 Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, saith the LORD, whose name [is] The God of hosts; *they shall go beyond the Syrians, who were carried from Damascus, that is, farther from home. Stephen says, beyond Babylon, (Acts vii. 43.,) thither the Syrians were carried; but the ten tribes shall go beyond them.*

## REFLECTIONS.

1. IT is a sign that the ruin of a people is approaching, when they oppose all methods of reformation: when they are not only unjust, oppressive, and luxurious, but hate magistrates who punish vice, and ministers who reprove them for it: yea, hate every one *that speaketh uprightly*, and will not run to their excesses. This is a proof that they have lost all shame, and are determined to go on in their wickedness; and it is a melancholy instance of our own degeneracy, as a nation, that wicked men and corrupters are

\* They had idolatrous tabernacles, and processions with the images of their gods; perhaps a star was carried about, as the Egyptians thought some of their kings were changed into stars, or had each the direction of some particular star.

countenanced and encouraged, while reprovers and magistrates are become hateful.

2. It is sometimes prudent to keep silence, and not even attempt to reform others. When men are so determined on their evil courses, that they will be only provoked by the most friendly attempts to check them, and perhaps be made worse by such attempts, it may be prudent to let them alone, and *not cast our pearls before swine*; who will not only trample them under their feet, *but turn again, and rend us*. We ought never to omit attempting to do good, when it seems likely to succeed; but *wisdom is profitable to direct*.

3. We here see the importance of seeking to God, especially in times of danger. It is often urged upon Israel, to inquire into his will, and to pray to him: and it is certainly the only way to live, to be secure and happy. Let us consider his vast power over all nature, over the stars, the morning, and the waves of the sea; and were it only *a may be* that God will be gracious, as in v. 15., it is worth while to make the trial. But, to our seeking God we must add, seeking all that is good; otherwise we shall not succeed. This leads us to observe,

4. The folly of external services, without reformation. With what contempt does God here (as often in the prophecies) speak of sacrifices, solemn assemblies, incense, songs, &c., while justice and charity are neglected. They are all abominable both to God and man. If men do not leave off oppression and injustice, and building houses with the gains of violence and fraud, they do but mock and affront God by their devotions. The end of prayer is reformation and holiness; and if a man *regards iniquity in his heart, the Lord will not hear him*.

5. Sinners will find the day of the Lord very different from what they expect. These infidels and scorners bantered the prophet: 'You threaten us with the day of the Lord; we should be glad to see it.' Thus testifying their disbelief or contempt of it. This, it is to be feared, is the case of many in the present day, who make light of God's threatenings. It is evidently the case of those profane wretches who call upon God to damn them. They will find damnation infinitely more dreadful than they think. They will know the day of the Lord to be indeed a dismal and a fearful day. Wicked men, when under pains and afflictions, wish for death; but, should it come, their case would be, as in v. 19., *as if a man should flee to his house for shelter from a storm, and there be bitten by a serpent*. All this shows the wisdom and necessity of

being truly religious; that the day of the Lord may be light to us, and we may be received to *the inheritance of the saints in light.*

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## CHAPTER VI.

This is a prophecy both against Judah and Israel.

1 **W**OE to them [that are] at ease, *or secure*, in Zion, *who think themselves safe on account of its holiness or strength*, and trust in the mountain of Samaria, [which are] named chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel came! *These cities were the capitals of the two nations, to which they resorted for traffic and judgment.* 2 Pass ye unto Calneh, *an ancient city built by Nimrod*, and see; and from thence go ye to Hamath the great; *to Antioch, conquered by Sennacherib*: then go down to Gath of the Philistines, *which was taken by Uzziah*: [be they] better than these kingdoms? or their border greater than your border? *are Judah and Israel better and stronger than these? so likewise shall they be destroyed.* 3 Ye that put far away the evil day, *who think it will not come at all, or is at a great distance*, and cause the seat of violence to come near, *are therefore guilty of injustice and oppression*; 4 That lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall, *who live in splendour, idleness, and luxury*; 5 That chant to the sound of the viol, [and] invent to themselves instruments of music, like David, *who had the finest bands and instruments of music, which therefore became proverbial*; or, *it may mean, who have indulged themselves in pleasures too expensive for any but the greatest monarchs*; 6 That drink wine in bowls, *in large quantities and superb vessels*, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments, *the most fragrant and costly*: but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph: *an allusion to the cruelty of Joseph's brethren; intimating, that they are insensible of the calamities of their country.*

7 Therefore now shall they go captive with the first that go captive, and the banquet of them that stretched themselves shall be removed; *these rich and great men shall suffer first, and all their luxury be at an end.* 8 The Lord God hath sworn by himself, saith the Lord, the God of hosts, I abhor the excellency of Jacob, and hate his palaces, *what*

*they value themselves upon: therefore will I deliver up the city with all that is therein; first Samaria, and then Jerusalem.* 9 And it shall come to pass, if there remain ten men in one house of those that escape the enemy, that they shall die by pestilence, or some other stroke of God's hand. 10 And a man's uncle, or kinsman, (to whom it belonged to attend the funeral,) shall take him up, and he that burneth him, to bring out the bones out of the house, who burns the body in the time of the plague, to prevent the infection from spreading, and shall say unto him that [is] by the sides of the house, to the person who brought out the corpse, [Is there] yet [any] with thee? *Is this the last of the family?* and he shall say, No. Then shall he, the uncle, say, Hold thy tongue: for we may not make mention of the name of the LORD; *though it is common and natural to say in such a case, Lord, help us, have mercy upon us; the person without shall break in upon him before he can do it, and forbid him to mention the name of the Lord, saying, it is in vain, for the Lord hath entirely given us up.* 11 For, behold, the LORD commandeth, and he will smite the great house with breaches, and the little house with clefts; *palaces and cottages shall both fall.*

12 Shall horses run upon the rock? will [one] plough [there] with oxen? *and it signifies us little to reprove and exhort you any more; for ye have turned judgment into gall, and the fruit of righteousness into hemlock: ye are like a polluted fountain or poisonous plant, and have lost all sense of justice:* 13 Ye which rejoice in a thing of nought, which say, Have we not taken to us horns by our own strength? *referring to some victory they had gained, probably over Judah, which had elated them, and led them to conclude that God would still prosper them, or, that they were able to do without him.* 14 But, behold, I will raise up against you a nation, *that is, the Assyrians,* O house of Israel, saith the LORD, the God of hosts; and they shall afflict you from the entering in of Hamath unto the river of the wilderness; *from the north to the south, through the whole land.*

## REFLECTIONS.

1. LET us reflect on the sad state of those, who, when sickness or death come into their families, are not affected thereby. How monstrous was the behaviour of these people in times of pestilence, when whole families were swept away, to forbid the men-

tion of the name of the Lord. This was the effect either of impiety, or despair: and is much the case of many now; who talk of the particulars of the sickness and death of their relatives and friends, the circumstances of the funeral, and their affairs, but forget the hand of God, and mention not his name. This shows a very stupid and insensible spirit, in creatures who are equally liable to sickness and death. It is our wisdom and duty to *hear the rod, and Him that hath appointed it*; to mention his name, and acknowledge the hand of his providence, and be led, by such afflictive scenes, to apply our hearts more diligently to wisdom, and a preparation for our latter end.

2. See the fatal influence which prosperity often hath upon the human mind. What a melancholy description of the temper and character of the Israelites is here given! and how exact a description is it of multitudes among us! When their riches increase, they grow proud, and secure; treat others with insolence and contempt; indulge themselves in luxury, and all delicacies; regard nothing but gratifying their senses; and support their grandeur and elegance by injustice and oppression. This excludes all serious consideration from their minds, and they put death far from them, as an evil day. Wealth, luxury, riot, and diversions, steel their hearts against every generous impression; their spirits grow narrow and selfish; the concerns of the poor and the needy, the afflictions of the church of God and of their country, are nothing to them. There are too many sad instances of this in our day. The world thinks it is well with such persons, and envies their grandeur and finery; they think it well with themselves, because *they are at ease*; but the Lord says, *Woe unto them*. Let those who are in plentiful circumstances be very watchful against such a temper and conduct as this; and let it reconcile others to narrow circumstances, and even to poverty, that they are happily freed from such strong temptations. Happy is the man who, amidst his affluence, maintains a humble, tender, generous spirit, and *honours the Lord with his substance*.

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## CHAPTER VII.

The judgments of the grasshoppers, and of the fire, are diverted by the intercession of Amos.

1 **THUS** hath the Lord GOD shewed unto me *in vision*; and, behold he formed grasshoppers in the beginning of the shooting up of the latter growth; and, lo, [it was] the latter growth after the king's mowings. *The king as usual mowed the earlier grass for himself, (an instance of grievous oppression,) after which grasshoppers suddenly appeared in great quantities; referring to desolation brought on the country by civil wars, during the interregnum of eleven years after Jeroboam the second, when Israel was cut short after its prosperity.* 2 And it came to pass, [that] when they had made an end, or rather, *would have made an end*, of eating the grass of the land, then I said, O Lord GOD, forgive, I beseech thee: by whom shall Jacob arise? for he [is] small; *how shall any strength remain to save them from destruction.* 3 The LORD repented for this: It shall not be, *the entire ruin of the country shall not yet take place*, saith the LORD.

4 Thus hath the Lord GOD showed unto me: and, behold, the Lord GOD called to contend by fire, and it devoured the great deep, and did eat up a part; *like a burning mountain thrown into the sea, the vast heat of which dried up a great part of its waters; referring to Tilgath-pilneser, king of Assyria, who took many cities and carried away many captives.* 5 Then said I, O Lord GOD, cease, I beseech thee: by whom shall Jacob arise? for he [is] small. 6 The LORD repented for this: This also shall not be, saith the Lord GOD; *the nation shall not be entirely consumed by this judgment.*

7 Thus he showed me: and, behold, the LORD stood upon a wall [made] by a plumb line, with a plumb line in his hand; *referring to the final judgment brought on Israel by Salmneser, and intimating that it should be brought with exact justice, and that all should be destroyed.* 8 And the LORD said unto me, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A plumb line. Then said the LORD, Behold, I will set a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel: I will not again pass by them any more; *I will not pass over their transgressions again:* 9 And the high places of Isaac

shall be desolate, and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste ; and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword\*.

10 Then Amaziah the priest of Beth-el sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, Amos hath conspired against thee in the midst of the house of Israel: the land is not able to bear all his words; *he laid an information against him before the king, alleging that he preached in such a seditious and treasonable manner, that it was not to be endured.* 11 For thus Amos saith, Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of their own land †. 12 Also Amaziah said unto Amos, O thou seer, go, flee thee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there; *as if he had said, Thou prophesiest only to get bread, and thou wilt meet with a better reception in Judah:* 13 But prophesy not again any more at Beth-el: for it [is] the king's chapel, or sanctuary, and it [is] the king's court; *or, the house of the kingdom; it is audacious and dangerous to insult him and his court here.*

14 Then answered Amos, and said to Amaziah, I [was] no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I [was] an herdsman, and a gatherer of sycamore-fruit, *or, wild figs; I was not by profession a prophet, nor educated at their college:* 15 And the LORD took me as I followed the flock, and the LORD said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel; *I came at his command, and will wait till he dismisses me.*

16 Now therefore hear thou the word of the LORD: Thou sayest, Prophesy not against Israel, and drop not [thy word] *even in the gentlest manner* against the house of Isaac. 17 Therefore thus saith the LORD; Thy wife shall be an harlot in the city, and thy sons and thy daughters shall fall by the sword; *your children shall be slain by the enemy, and your wife shall be abused by the soldiers, as a punishment for your spiritual whoredom,* and thy land shall be divided by line *among the Assyrians:* and thou shalt die in a polluted land: and, *notwithstanding all your boasts,* Israel shall go into captivity forth of his land.

\* Accordingly, Zachariah his son was destroyed by Shallum. Or it may refer to the destruction of the whole kingdom. What follows is a piece of private history relating to the prophet.

† He had said that Jeroboam's house should die by the sword; which did not imply that he himself should; but it is added, that he had also prophesied that *Israel should be carried captive.* The king wisely took no notice of this heavy charge, and therefore the priest attacked Amos himself, and in banter, though under a show of kindness, advised him to retire.



## REFLECTIONS.

1. WHEN a nation is in the lowest state, there is still reason and encouragement to pray. The prophet kindly interceded for the house of Jacob, as God's people, and because it was *small*, that is, had little strength left, and no friend to help. God graciously heard his prayer, averted the threatened judgments, and suspended their utter ruin. Let this be an encouragement to us to pray earnestly for our country, that judgments may be averted, or, when begun among us, may cease; and especially that the sins which occasioned them may be forgiven. The low and helpless state to which God's church and people are reduced, is a proper plea when asking for mercy and favour on their account.

2. See how the best friends of a country may be accused, and treated even as its worst enemies: so were Jeremiah, Amos, and Paul treated, and even Jesus, by Herod and Pilate. Though Amos was a faithful prophet, and an earnest intercessor for Israel, yet he was ill used, especially by the priests of Bethel. The greatest pretenders to religion are often the bitterest persecutors of the truly religious. They misrepresented him as preaching for bread, and advancing doctrines seditious and treasonable. This is the common language and plea of persecutors. The best of men have been thus treated, and so they probably may still be treated by those who hate eminent religion, and faithful admonitions. But while they are thus enemies to God's faithful ministers, they are enemies to their country, and to their own peace.

3. The consciousness of a call of providence, united with upright intentions, will give a man courage in a good work. Amos tells the priests what made him so bold; he did not run before he was sent; did not preach for bread; and he would hardly have had so much courage as to preach in the king's chapel, without a special commission. A consciousness that he was obeying the commands of God, bore him through all. Thus may God's faithful ministers and people stand firm against opposition and contempt, having a good cause to defend, and a good God on their side. Thus may we stand; only let us be careful, like the prophet, *to give a reason for our conduct, and for the hope that is in us, with meekness and fear.*

## CHAPTER VIII.

By a basket of summer fruit, is showed the approach of Israel's end. Their oppression of the poor is reproved; and a famine of God's word threatened.

1 **THUS** hath the Lord God showed unto me: and behold a basket of summer fruit. 2 And he said, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A basket of summer fruit. Then said the Lord unto me, The end is come upon my people of Israel; I will not again pass by them any more; *they are ripe for judgment, and shall very quickly be plucked off and destroyed, as summer fruits are.* 3 And the songs of the temple shall be howlings in that day, saith the Lord God; *their songs at their solemn festivals in their idolatrous temples shall be turned into howling: [there shall be] many dead bodies in every place; they shall cast [them] forth with silence; without the usual forms of lamentation, because of their number, or of their enemies being so near.*

4 Hear this, O ye that swallow up the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail, *who devour their substance, and make slaves of them all,* 5 Saying, When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat? *who, though you keep up some forms of religion, are impatient during the time of rest and worship, and intent only on gain; making the ephah small, and the shekel great; and falsifying the balances by deceit; using a double fraud in your trade, selling your corn by the ephah (about a bushel) and making this small, but taking money for it by weight, and making the shekel, by which you reckon that money, larger than it should be:* 6 That we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes; [yea,] and sell the refuse of the wheat? *selling the worst commodities so dear, that the poor cannot furnish themselves with necessaries of the meanest kind, and are forced to sell themselves for slaves to pay their debts; and who have so little compassion, that if they do but owe the value of a pair of sandals, will rather seize and sell them for slaves, than forgive so small a debt.* 7 The Lord hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, *by himself, who is the excellency of Jacob,* Surely I will never forget any of their works, *but will call them to an account for them.* 8 Shall not the land tremble for this, and every one mourn that

dwelleth therein? and it, *that is, destruction*, shall rise up wholly as a flood; *or, as the river*; and it shall be cast out and drowned, as [by] the flood of Egypt; *that is, as the Nile when it overflows its banks, and sweeps every thing away.* 9 And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD GOD, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day; *I will bring judgments upon them in a sudden, unexpected manner\**: 10 And I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation; and I will bring up sackcloth upon all loins, and baldness upon every head; and I will make it as the mourning of an only [son,] and the end thereof as a bitter day.

11 Behold the days come, saith the LORD GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD; *they shall not have the advantage of consulting the prophets*: 12 And they shall wander from sea to sea, *from the western to the eastern sea*, and from the north even to the east, *or, rather to the south*, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find [it;] *under the pressure of judgments they shall wish to consult it, but shall not be able.* 13 In that day shall the fair virgins and young men faint for thirst; *the most beautiful and strong shall be dispirited by the want of the common necessities of life, as well as of the word of God.* 14 They that swear by the sin of Samaria, *by the calves of Samaria*, (*Deut. ix. 21.*) and say, Thy God, O Dan, liveth; *that is, they shall worship and solemnly swear by them*; and the manner of Beer-sheba liveth; *that is, the way of worship used at Beer-sheba*; even they shall fall, and never rise up again; *they shall be utterly destroyed by the Assyrians.*

## REFLECTIONS.

1. WHEN a nation is ripe for ruin, it will come. An awful idea is suggested, (*v. 2.*) *I will not pass by them any more.* Destruction is gradually advancing as sin increases, till at length it comes upon a country like a deluge. Every sin, every neglect of duty, hastens on the dreadful crisis. As, therefore, we love our country and families, let us *put away iniquity far from us.*

\* Astronomers have shown, by calculating eclipses, that about eleven years after this prophecy there were two remarkable eclipses of the sun, both visible in that country; one at the feast of the passover, the other at the feast of tabernacles; this may refer to them, as they were then no doubt looked upon as very alarming and ominous.

2. See the connexion there is between ungodliness and injustice. It is a melancholy description of the state of this people, that they kept the sabbaths, new moons, and solemn feasts, only out of form and custom; while they were weary of them, and really disliked them: and this is the case of many still; they had rather be in their shops, or at markets, pursuing their business, and getting money, than at the house and in the worship of God: their hearts are not in the rest and work of the sabbath. And what is the consequence of this impiety? they are unjust in their dealings, fraudulent in their commerce, oppressive to the poor; draw their riches out of the very bowels of their workmen and families; and care not what others suffer, so that they can get wealth. Many rich merchants, tradesmen, and farmers are, it is to be feared, of this character, but *let them not be deceived*; for, *v. 7., the Lord hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, Surely I will never forget any of their works.* He will avenge upon them the contempt of his day and worship, and the contempt and cruelty with which they treat their brethren.

3. We know that a famine of bread is bad; and are here taught that *a famine of hearing the word* is much worse. That is also the judgment of God, though, it is to be lamented, few people regard it as such. It is dreadful to want bread and water; but to want *the bread of life, and the waters of the sanctuary*, is really as much more dreadful, as the soul is more valuable than the body. And this threatening shows what a value God puts upon his ordinances, and how highly those who are favoured with them should value them. But, as when there is plenty of bread, so in plenty of ordinances, men are apt to be surfeited with them, and become weary of them, to discourage their ministers, and neglect their services: and it is then just in God to take them away.

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## CHAPTER IX.

The certainty of the desolation of idolaters, and the restoring of the tabernacle of David.

**I** SAW the LORD standing upon the altar at *Bethel*, in a war-like posture, to destroy the idolaters and their idolatry: and he said, Smite the lintel of the door, that the posts may shake: and cut

them in the head, all of them; *strike them with a mortal wound*; and I will slay the last of them with the sword: he that fleeth of them shall not flee away, and he that escapeth of them shall not be delivered; *destruction shall meet them when they think they have escaped.*

2 Though they dig into hell, *into the grave, or, the centre of the earth*, thence shall mine hand take them; though they climb up to heaven, *to the highest mountain*, thence will I bring them down:

3 And though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, *in the caves there*, I will search and take them out thence; and though they be hid from my sight in the bottom of the sea, thence will I command the serpent, *or, some voracious fish*, and he shall bite them:

4 And though they go into captivity before their enemies, thence will I command the sword, and it shall slay them; *though, having suffered some lesser judgments, they may think themselves safe, yet they shall not escape greater ones*: and I will set mine eyes upon them for evil, and not for good.

5 And the LORD GOD of hosts [is] he that toucheth the land, and it shall melt; *the least token of his displeasure puts all nature into confusion*; and all that dwell therein shall mourn: and it shall rise up wholly like a flood; and shall be drowned as [by] the flood of Egypt; *their destruction shall come like the overflowing of the Nile.*

6 [It is] he that buildeth his storied in the heaven, *in the several regions of the air, one above another, where he lays up his magazines of thunder, lightning, and hail*, and hath founded his troop, *or rather, his storehouse*, in the earth\*; he that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth; *either in fruitful showers or destructive torrents, according to his sovereign will*: THE LORD [is] his name.

7 [Are] ye not as children of the Ethiopians unto me, O children of Israel? saith the LORD; *have I any inducement to bear thus with the children of Israel? have I not reason to look upon them with as much detestation, as ever I did on accursed Ham and his posterity?* Have not I brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt? and the Philistines from Caphtor, and the Syrians from Kir? *do you think that because I brought you from Egypt, I am still obliged to bear with, and protect, you? have I not delivered other nations, and transplanted them into fertile countries, and yet punished them? particularly your neighbouring enemies the Philistines and Syrians? and I shall now regard you no more than them.*

8 Behold, the eyes of the LORD GOD [are] upon the sinful kingdom of Israel, and I will destroy it from off the face of the earth; sav-

\* Probably this is an allusion to repositories in the lower parts of houses, or to such as were sometimes digged in the fields.

ing that I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob, saith the LORD. 9 For, lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as [corn] is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth; *though I will thus mix the Israelites with distant nations, yet the devout and faithful among them I will spare, and bring back by various deliverances to their own land.* But 10 All the sinners of my people, *they who are most secure and presumptuous,* shall die by the sword, which say, The evil shall not overtake nor prevent us.—*The prophet then concludes, as most of the prophets do, with a prediction of the Messiah's kingdom, and the restoration of the family of David, in the person and kingdom of Christ.*

11 In that day, *in the time of the Messiah,* will I raise up the tabernacle (*here elegantly put for the kingdom or family*) of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, *referring to the low state of that family when Christ appeared,* and I will build it as in the days of old: 12 That they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, which are called by my name, saith the LORD that doeth this; *that heathen nations, and those who are now the greatest enemies to God and his people, may be brought into the church\*.* 13 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that the ploughman shall overtake, or rather, *shall meet, or draw near to,* the reaper, and the trader of grapes him that soweth seed; *the harvest and the vintage shall be so plentiful, that the gathering-in shall last till seed-time;* and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt; *the soil shall be made mellow and luxuriant, and the mountains and the hills shall flow as it were with the abundance of wine produced on them.* 14 And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit [them;] and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. 15 And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the LORD thy God †.

\* The passage is quoted, Acts xv. 17., in the first council at Jerusalem, as a proof that the Gentiles were to be brought into the christian church, that the residue of men may seek the Lord; so the LXX. translate and the apostles quote it.

† Mr. Henry justly interprets this of their conversion, but refers it to their being joined to the christian churches wherever they are dispersed; whereas to me it seems very plain, from this passage, and many others, that they shall come to their own land, and then be converted, and never apostatize from God any more.

## REFLECTIONS.

1. WE see how impossible it is for sinners to escape the judgments of God. We have here a noble and solemn description of his universal presence and irresistible power, and of his determination to punish all his enemies. How dreadful then is the case of those, who have *the eyes of God against them for evil!* There is no place to which they can escape from his notice, or where they can shun his avenging hand. *Stand, therefore, in awe, and sin not.*

2. We are here taught God's esteem for his people, and the care which he takes of them. Though he may *sift them among all nations*, and bring distressing judgments upon them, *he will not permit the least grain to fall to the earth*; not one of his faithful servants shall be lost. He will defend them in the day of evil; or, if they suffer with others, they shall not be destroyed. *His fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor*; but the precious grain shall all be preserved.

3. Let us rejoice in the fulfilling of this prophecy. *God's name is called upon the heathen*; the kingdom of Christ is established among them; and we in this nation have been led to seek the Lord, and are become a part of his people: and we see that there is still hope concerning the restoration and conversion of the Jews. Let it be our prayer that God would bring them into his church and favour again, and *give his Son the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession.*

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# THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET OBADIAH.

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## INTRODUCTION.

WE have no account of this prophet, nor of the time when he prophesied; probably it was just after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans. He is thought to have been contemporary with Jeremiah and Ezekiel, who foretold the similar destruction of the Edomites, or descendants of Esau, on account of their cruel insult of the Jews after their city was taken. The prophecy, according to Abp. Usher, was fulfilled about five years after the taking of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans. It is called a vision; but we have no account of any thing he saw; the term may signify any message by a prophet.

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1 **THE** vision of Obadiah. Thus saith the Lord GOD concerning Edom; We have heard a rumour from the LORD, and an ambassador is sent among the heathen, Arise ye, and let us rise up against her in battle: *the forces of the heathen are summoned to unite with each other and with God against Edom; a representation, designed to encourage the Israelites, who were now carried captive.*  
2 Behold, I have made thee small among the heathen: thou art greatly despised, *notwithstanding all thy pride and insolence.*

3 The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee, thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation [is] high, *in a rocky country and in fortified places,* that saith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground? 4 Though thou exalt [thyself] as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the LORD. 5 If thieves came to thee, if robbers by night, (how art thou cut off!) would they not have stolen till they had enough? if the grape gatherers came to thee, would they not leave [some] grapes? *they would not have consumed every thing; if they had taken away the most valuable, they would have left something; but thine enemies shall destroy what they cannot*



*carry away.* 6 How are [the things] of Esau searched out! [how] are his hidden things, *his rich treasures*, sought up! 7 All the men of thy confederacy have brought thee [even] to the border: the men that were at peace with thee have deceived thee, [and] prevailed against thee; *they went with thee to thy borders to repel thy invaders, and then treacherously forsook thee*; [they that eat] thy bread have laid a wound under thee; *have secretly and slyly wounded thee, or, laid a snare for thee*: [there is] none understanding in him. 8 Shall I not in that day, saith the LORD, even destroy the wise [men] out of Edom, *who were famous for the wisdom of their politics*, and understanding out of the mount of Esau? 9 And thy mighty [men,] O Teman, shall be dismayed, to the end that every one of the mount of Esau may be cut off by slaughter.

10 For [thy] violence against thy brother Jacob, *that is, the Jews, who descended from Jacob, Esau's brother, and because thou wast ready to share the plunder with their enemies*, shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever; *accordingly, they never recovered the possession of their country, Arabia Petraea.* 11 In the day that thou stoodest on the other side, in the day that the strangers carried away captive his forces, and foreigners entered into his gates, and cast lots upon Jerusalem, even thou [wast] as one of them, *which was highly unjust and cruel.* 12 But thou shouldst not have looked *with delight* on the day of thy brother, in the day that he became a stranger; neither shouldst thou have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction; neither shouldst thou have spoken proudly, *insolently triumphed over them*, in the day of distress. 13 Thou shouldst not have entered into the gate of my people in the day of their calamity; yea, thou shouldst not have looked *with delight* on their affliction in the day of their calamity, nor have laid [hands] on their substance in the day of their calamity; 14 Neither shouldst thou have stood in the cross way, to cut off those that did escape, *and fled*; neither shouldst thou have delivered up, *or, shut up from any way of escape*, those of his that did remain in the day of distress, *who had escaped the Chaldean sword and rage.* 15 For the day of the LORD [is] near upon all the heathen: as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee: thy reward shall return upon thine own head, *and others shall rejoice in thy calamity.* 16 For as ye, *my people*, have drunk upon my holy mountain *of the cup of affliction*, [so] shall all the heathen drink continually, yea, they shall drink, and they shall swallow down *the very dregs*, and they shall be as though they had not been; *they shall be quite destroyed.*

17 But upon mount Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness; and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions; *the captives shall return, be cured of their idolatry, and be holy, safe, and happy.* 18 And the house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau for stubble, and they shall kindle in them, and devour them; and there shall not be [any] remaining of the house of Esau; for the LORD hath spoken [it\*.] 19 And [they of] the south shall possess the mount of Esau; and [they of] the plain the Philistines; and they shall possess the fields of Ephraim, and the fields of Samaria: and Benjamin [shall possess] Gilead; *those who return from Babylon shall extend themselves every way, and Benjamin shall extend his border quite to Gilead beyond Jordan.* 20 And the captivity of this host of the children of Israel [shall possess] that of the Canaanites, [even] unto Zarephath; and the captivity of Jerusalem, which [is] in Sepharad, shall possess the cities of the south; *those who were captives among the Canaanites shall possess the country of the Canaanites, and those whom the Edomites had enslaved shall possess the cities of their masters †.* 21 And saviours, *the Maccabees,* shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the LORD's; *probably meaning that God shall prosper the affairs of the Jews, and enable them to extend their borders; he will raise up some noble persons, who shall conquer Samaria and the Edomites: but some understand all these verses, as referring to the success of the gospel, and the accession of the heathen to the christian church, even those that had been its bitterest enemies.*

## REFLECTIONS.

1. SEE how necessary it is to guard against pride, to which the calamity of Edom was owing. They thought themselves wiser than other nations, especially than the Israelites whom they hated; and imagined themselves quite secure in their situation, wisdom, wealth, and allies; but all disappointed them; and their pride, which led them to this confidence, deceived and destroyed them. Let us watch narrowly against a vice to which we are so

\* This was fulfilled when John Hyrcanus, one of the Maccabees, a governor of the Jews, conquered the Edomites, and obliged them to become Jews, or to leave their country, so that they were quite swallowed up.—JOSEPHUS'S Antiq. l. xiii. c. 9; 1 Macc. v.; 2 Macc. x.

† See LOWTH'S Com., in loc.

prone, and which is so displeasing to God, and therefore so hurtful to ourselves. *He that exalteth himself shall be abased, but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.*

2. Observe how highly God resents the behaviour of those who rejoice in the calamities of others. Of this the Edomites were peculiarly guilty toward Israel. They were glad to have a rival brother brought down, and triumphed in his humiliation; but this was the highest cruelty to them, (*adding affliction to the afflicted,*) and an affront to God and his providence. They should have pitied, sheltered, and relieved them, and thus have prepared for their own approaching troubles. *Even to look with pleasure on the sufferings of others, though we do not add to them, is highly provoking to God, and he may soon put into our hands a bitterer cup than ever they drank.* Let us watch against all inhumanity, *rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep.*

3. God's design in delivering his people is, *that they may be holy*, ver. 17. This is the end aimed at in temporal deliverances; but especially in our great salvation by Christ, and the establishment of his kingdom; and it becomes those who have been delivered out of the hands of their enemies, human or infernal, to *serve God in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of their lives.*

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# THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET JONAH.

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## INTRODUCTION.

JONAH was a native of Gath-hepher, in Galilee, and an eminent type of our Saviour's resurrection, Matt. xii. 37, 40. He is the most ancient of all the prophets; he lived in the reign of Jeroboam, above eight hundred years before Christ. See 2 Kings xiv. 23—25.

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## CHAPTER I.

In which we have a command to Jonah to go and reprove Nineveh, but through fear he fleeth to Tarshish; he is thrown into the sea, and swallowed by a fish.

1 **N**OW the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, 2 Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city\*, and cry against it, *foretell the judgments coming upon it*; for their wickedness is come up before me. 3 But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish† from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD; *not from his essential presence, that was impossible, but from the Shekinah, imagining perhaps that the prophetic inspiration would not follow him out of Canaan‡.*

4 But the LORD sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like,

\* Nineveh was about nineteen miles long and eleven broad; very ancient, and then in its glory.

† The word Tarshish may signify any maritime place of trade, though it is generally supposed here to mean Tartessus in Spain.

‡ The mission was disagreeable, the journey was long and hazardous. Perhaps he thought that they might repent and be forgiven, and that then he might be branded as a false prophet; or, that the king of Assyria might destroy him; in all this he showed great want of faith and resignation to God.

or supposed, to be broken. 5 Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that [were] in the ship into the sea, to lighten [it] of them. But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship, *into the hold*; and he lay, and was fast asleep; *though the most guilty person, he was the least affected, as is too commonly the case; such is the deceitfulness and stupifying tendency of sin.* So the ship-master, or pilot, came to him, and said to him, What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not; *though a heathen, he speaks of one God as supreme, considering others as mediators only.* 7 And they said every one to his fellow, Come, and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this *great and uncommon* evil [is] upon us\*. So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah. 8 Then said they unto him, Tell us, we pray thee, for whose cause this evil [is] upon us? What [is] thine occupation? and whence comest thou? what [is] thy country? and of what people [art] thou?† 9 And he said unto them, I [am] an Hebrew; and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry [land;] *I serve and worship Jehovah, the only Creator and Lord of all things.* 10 Then were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him, Why hast thou done this? *what a heinous crime is it to fly from that great God whom thou dost worship, and ownest as the creator and governor of all things?* For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them.

11 Then said they unto him, What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us? *wishing to do nothing without the consent of so considerable a person, whom they could not but reverence:* for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous. 12 And he said unto them, *probably by immediate inspiration,* Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you: for I know that for my sake this great tempest [is] upon you: *a most generous confession and proposal.* 13 Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring [it] to the land; but they could not: for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous against them; *it raged with greater force.* 14 Wherefore they cried unto the LORD, *unto Jehovah, Jonah's God, because they knew he brought the tem-*

\* This shows a strong impression of a particular providence: they thought some god had raised the storm, and raised it for the punishment of the sins of some one in the ship, and were persuaded that the lot would fall upon the guilty.

† Seeing him to be a person of a grave, decent appearance, they could hardly suspect him of doing evil, therefore they desired to know it from himself: they spoke altogether like men affrighted and in confusion.

*pest, and considered Jonah as his servant and prophet, and said, We beseech thee, O LORD, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood: for thou, O LORD, hast done as it pleased thee; we are acting by thy command.* 15 So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging, *which showed that they had done right.* 16 Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the LORD, and made vows; *they were convinced of his power and greatness, and vowed to sacrifice to him when they came to land.*

17 Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah; *this was probably a shark, for the throat of a whale is not large enough to swallow a man, and there are no whales found in the Mediterranean sea.* And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights; *that is, part of three natural days; he was thrown out of the ship perhaps in the evening, continued the following day alive, by a miracle, and was thrown up the next morning.*

### REFLECTIONS.

1. How much need have we to guard our hearts, lest we disobey the commands of God. Jonah fled to avoid the execution of his orders, and terrible means were used to bring him back. His disobedience was indeed peculiarly inexcusable, considering his knowledge of God, the discoveries made to him, and the honour conferred upon him. The heathen sailors justly reproached him. Let us reverence the authority of God, and cheerfully obey all his commands; not fearing any consequences while engaged in his work. *We cannot fly from his presence; and if we outrun his work, we only run upon our own ruin.*

2. See the strength of the principles of religion in the minds of these heathens. They considered storms as coming by the appointment of their gods; saw the reasonableness of praying to them; and called upon Jonah to address his God: they thought that the judgment was sent for some heinous sin; they had a clear idea of an overruling providence in disposing of lots; and were fearful of contracting the guilt of shedding innocent blood. All these were the dictates of reason and natural conscience; and it is to be lamented that so few christians, with their clearer light and greater advantages, believe, so as to act upon these important principles.

3. See the amazing power of God as displayed in these scenes. He can command and raise the stormy winds, and bid them cease; and can rule the raging of the sea. He prepared a fish to swallow *Jonah*, and kept him alive for so many hours in its belly. It becomes us exceedingly to fear this great Being, who made the sea, and the dry land, and does according to his will with the elements and inhabitants of both.

4. The circumstances of *Jonah* lead our thoughts to the death, burial, and resurrection, of Christ. Just as long as *Jonah* was in the belly of the fish, so long was Christ in the grave; *Matt. xii. 40.* From thence he arose, as much unexpected by his enemies, as *Jonah* was from his moving grave; and as *Jonah's* deliverance confirmed his authority as a prophet, so *Christ* was declared to be the Son of God with power, by his resurrection from the dead; and it therefore becomes us to hear and obey him in all things.

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## CHAPTER II.

The prayer of *Jonah*, and his delivery from the belly of the fish; finding himself alive, and preserved in so extraordinary a manner, where, without a miracle, he would have been immediately suffocated, he drew encouragement to pray and hope.

1 **T**HEN *Jonah* prayed unto the LORD his God out of the fish's belly, 2 And said, *that is, these were the workings of his mind, and the substance of his thoughts, during his confinement; I cried by reason of mine affliction, or, out of mine affliction, unto the LORD, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, that is, the grave, or pit, in which he seemed to be buried alive, [and] thou heardest my voice.* 3 For thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas: and the floods compassed me about: all thy billows and thy waves passed over me; *applying to himself the words of David, Psalm xlii. 7. David used them figuratively, but Jonah literally.* 4 Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; *when I was first thrown out I was dispirited; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple\*.* 5 The waters compassed me about,

\* The Israelites, when abroad, used to pray with their faces toward the temple; but as *Jonah* could not tell, in his situation, which way Jerusalem lay, he could turn his thoughts thither; or perhaps he may refer to God's temple in heaven; his meaning certainly is, I will pray, and hope to find mercy. A glorious triumph of faith, considering his present circumstances!

[even] to the soul: the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head. 6 I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; *I seemed buried, as much as if I had been under the highest mountain*; the earth with her bars [was] about me for ever; *humanly speaking, there was no hope of restoration*: yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, or destruction, O LORD my God; *I had confidence in thy mercy that thou wouldst do so*. 7 When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the LORD: and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple; *I had a comfortable assurance that my prayer was heard*. 8 They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy; *referring perhaps to idolaters in general, or to the mariners culling each on his god; or rather, to his own folly in disobeying the command of Jehovah*. 9 But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay [that] that I have vowed; *being strongly persuaded that I should be delivered, I not only resolved to praise God, but to go through Jerusalem in my way to Nineveh, and there sacrifice to the Lord*. Salvation [is] of the LORD; *it is all to be ascribed to him*.

10 And the LORD spake unto the fish, *he made such an impression upon it, as disposed it to do what he intended*, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry [land;] or, *so near the shore that he could reach it without danger*.

## REFLECTIONS.

1. FROM this chapter we may infer the importance and necessity of prayer. Happy was it for Jonah that he had been used to this work; and had treasured up in his memory many of David's devout sentiments and expressions, several of which he adopts in this short address. We may be in circumstances and situations where we can have no one to pray for us; it is therefore very desirable that we should be accustomed to address God ourselves, and have a stock of pious thoughts and expressions in our minds; and especially to have *the word of God dwelling in us richly*; which is the best guide and help in prayer.

2. Here is great encouragement to humble penitents to pray and hope, even when in circumstances of the deepest distress, and into which they have brought themselves by their sins. In any place, and when no human help or hope is near, they may look up and address themselves to God. Though their souls faint, and are ready to despair; yet still let them remember the



Lord, and *come boldly to the throne of grace*. Jonah's acceptance and deliverance show us both the power and mercy of God, and that *he is near to the souls that seek him*.

3. *They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy*; v. 8. This is true not only of idolaters, but of all that forsake God. The honours, the possessions, the pleasures of the world, yea, every thing which they pursue to the neglect of him, is a *lying vanity*; it will deceive and disappoint their expectations. Whatever happiness men seek for in sinful courses, they run upon their own misery. God alone is able to help and support, and to be a suitable portion for the soul; and all that forsake him act contrary to their comfort and interest, as well as their duty.

4. God's delivering goodness ought to be thankfully acknowledged. When he has wrought out deliverances for us, or for those who are dear to us; especially in circumstances when we are ready to despair of relief, it is our evident duty to *sacrifice to him with the voice of thanksgiving*: and if, in our distress, we made vows of gratitude and better obedience, let us be careful to *pay what we have vowed*. Let us love God better, and love prayer better; and *live to him who is the God of our salvation, and to whom belong the issues from death*.

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### CHAPTER III.

Jonah is sent again to the Ninevites; and upon their repentance, God spareth them.

1 **AND** the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second time, and it was a great favour to be employed again after his former disobedience, saying, 2 Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee; *in the words that I shall bid thee when thou comest thither; words probably intended to convince them of their great wickedness, to inform them of God's displeasure, and of the vengeance coming upon them*: 3 So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days' journey; *near sixty miles round*. 4 And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, *about twenty miles, which was a day's journey for a man on foot: he began at the gate of the*

city, and he cried aloud, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown; that is, by some immediate judgment. He fixes the time, that there might appear something more extraordinary in the message, and to give them space to repent; his own extraordinary deliverance led him boldly to declare this message; this was his text, which he probably enlarged upon, so as fully to display their sin and danger; and his being a Hebrew might make his message the more regarded.

5 So the people of Nineveh believed God, were fully persuaded of the truth of what Jonah delivered to them from God, though we read of no miracle wrought by him, nor is it probable (as some have supposed) that any of the mariners should have informed the Ninevites of the miracle wrought for him, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth from the greatest of them even to the least of them; they fasted to add fervency to their prayer, and joined with this, sackcloth, to testify their humiliation, and the king himself set them a good example. 6 For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered [him] with sackcloth, and sat in ashes; he put on the habit of a mourning penitent. 7 And he caused [it] to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water; that the hearts of the people might be affected by the crying of their cattle: 8 But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, as horses are still sometimes put into mourning at the funerals of officers, &c., and cry mightily unto God; pray earnestly for pardon, when judgment is so near: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that [is] in their hands; let them forsake all sin, especially violence, injustice, and oppression, (which were their reigning sins,) and practise honesty and charity; giving this remarkable reason for the command; 9 Who can tell [if] God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?

10 And this was all that the light of nature could teach them: but Jonah probably gave them more encouragement, by assuring them of pardon; the happy consequence of this was, that God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did [it] not; he not only saw their humiliation and fasting, but their works; he saw that they were true penitents; he changed his purpose when they changed their behaviour, and the execution

*of the threatening was suspended; but, about a hundred years after this, having returned to their wickedness again, the city was taken and destroyed, as Nahum and Zephaniah foretold.*

### REFLECTIONS.

1. WE have here another remarkable proof of the divine displeasure against sin, especially the sins of injustice and oppression. These are crimes which the light of nature might have taught heathens to avoid, and are peculiarly inexcusable in christians. God does not indeed send any prophets to warn us against them; but he teacheth us by his nature, (his moral perfections and providence,) by his word, and especially by this story, that when he beholds violence and oppression, he is highly displeased with them, and will execute vengeance on those who practise them.

2. See the necessity of humiliation and prayer, in order to obtain the favour of God. It is our duty, as sinners, and as part of a sinful nation, to bewail our own and others' sins, and to cry mightily to God as those who are in earnest, for his forgiveness and favour. If we do not see the evil of sin, and our danger of destruction by it, and *stir up ourselves to call upon God*, we act worse than those heathens did. If we do not believe God when he threatens to destroy the impenitent, we are more stupid than they. Let us then *humble ourselves under his mighty hand, and seek his face, that we may be saved in the day of wrath.*

3. If we are desirous that our prayers should be acceptable, we must reform what is amiss in our lives; not only *lift up our hands unto God*, but *turn from the violence that is in them*. The exhortation here is excellent. *Let every one turn*; not blame one another, but each look to his own ways; that he may *put away the evil of his own doings*, and even the sins of his heart; for *if we regard iniquity in our hearts, the Lord will not hear us.*

4. This story gives all true penitents great encouragement to hope for mercy. If we had no further ground of hope than the Ninevites had; if it was only a *who can tell*, it would be our wisdom and duty to repent, and turn to God. But their deliverance, and many other histories and promises in God's word, assure us, *that there is forgiveness with him. Let his goodness lead us to repentance.* May it never be said of us, as our Lord said of the Jews, Matt. xii. 41., *The men of Nineveh shall rise in*

*judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonas, and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here: words still more alarming to us as christians; may they be deeply impressed on our hearts.*

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### CHAPTER IV.

Jonah, for repining at God's mercy, is reproved by the type of a gourd.

**1** **BUT** it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry; *he should rather have rejoiced in this great mercy: but a selfish concern for his credit as a prophet vexed him.* 2 And he prayed unto the LORD, and said, I pray thee, O LORD, [was] not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish; *pleading this as an excuse for his former disobedience, I thought that thou wouldst pardon them, and that I should be regarded as a false prophet, that when I came back again it would be said, I was not sent because Nineveh was not destroyed: for I knew that thou [art] a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil; the proclamation of God's name to Moses.* 3 Therefore now, O LORD, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for [it is] better for me to die than to live.

4 Then said the LORD, *Doest thou well to be angry? is there any just reason for it? is it decent or proper?* 5 So Jonah went out of the city, *rather was gone out,* and sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shadow, till he might see what would become of the city; *he made an arbour of the boughs of trees, and sat there to observe the event, but the leaves of his arbour quickly withered.* 6 And therefore the Lord God prepared a gourd, or plant, and made [it] to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief; *to shelter him from the heat, which added to his vexation.* So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd; *the plant coming up in a miraculous manner made it more agreeable.* 7 But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered. 8 And it came to pass, when the sun did arise, that God prepared a vehement, or rather, a still or silent, east wind, *which, by coming over the burning sands which*

*lay to the east of Nineveh, became very sultry; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted and wished in himself to die, and said, [It is] better for me to die than to live. 9 And God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd, or plant? Is it right thus to persist in thy impatience, notwithstanding thy former punishment and my kindness? And he said, I do well to be angry, [even] unto death; that is, to be angry as long as I live, yea, to break my heart with anger. From this event, God graciously argues with him concerning Nineveh. 10 Then said the LORD, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night: thou thinkest it a pity that so beautiful and comfortable a plant should be so soon destroyed, and thou wouldst have had it spared: 11 And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and [also] much cattle? that is, so many children under two years old; from whence it is probable that there were six hundred thousand human creatures in the city; and the innocent children, and the cattle would have been involved in the common destruction. This large city had been long in building, and the inhabitants long in rearing; the gourd came up in a night, and perished in a night; but the inhabitants of the city are immortal creatures; and shall I not much more spare them? A forcible argument this, to bring him to consideration and repentance; and probably it had this effect, though it is not mentioned.*

### REFLECTIONS.

1. WE are here taught the folly and wickedness of a fretful, passionate disposition; and what absurdities it runs men into. No doubt Jonah encouraged the Ninevites to repent by the hope of pardon on repentance, yet he was angry with God for sparing them though penitent; he was pleased with his gourd, (a very trifling accommodation,) and then mad with vexation that he had lost it. See into what folly and impiety unbridled passions lead men. They led Jonah to wish the destruction of a great city, to quarrel with God, and to desire to die himself. Had God sent a mortal disease upon him, he would probably have recalled his wish, and have desired to live. And certainly his temper was a very unfit one to appear in before God. How much corruption may

remain in the hearts of God's servants, and how careful should persons of warm passions be, to bridle their tongues, and rule their spirits.

2. The question which God put to Jonah, is very proper for all, in many circumstances, to put to themselves, especially those who are naturally hasty. '*Dost thou well to be angry?* is there a sufficient reason why thou art so soon and so long angry? is it right and commendable? canst thou approve it in cooler moments? will God excuse it?' Let us put such questions to ourselves, as often as we find angry passions rising, and especially be careful that we are never displeased with God for taking away any of our comforts (which are but gourds), and particularly when he is pleased to shew mercy to penitents, though it should be to our present disadvantage. To be angry at the repentance and salvation of others, is the very essence of the devil's temper. On the whole, let us take the greatest pains to preserve our minds calm and unruffled. and to be *well pleased with whatever God does.*

3. Let us admire and adore the wonderful tenderness and compassion of God: that he should condescend to reason with this foolish, passionate man, instead of taking away his life, as he madly desired. Observe the kind regard of God to little children; and let parents take encouragement from it to hope for his mercy to their offspring; especially when they are removed before they become capable of knowing good and evil. His concern for the cattle still further shows his tender mercy. God would not have the cattle, much less the children, and much less still so many thousands of reasonable creatures destroyed, to indulge a fretful prophet. They were infinitely more valuable than his gourd. Let this goodness of God engage us to *fear him, and hope in his mercy; who is long-suffering even to his enemies, and to his perverse children, and not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*

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THE BOOK OF  
THE PROPHET MICAH.

INTRODUCTION.

THE prophet Micah lived at the same time with Isaiah and Hosea. He prophesies concerning Israel and Judah; he reproves both of them for their sins, with great warmth and indignation; foretells their several captivities; and, for the comfort of the pious in each, delivers many things concerning the Messiah: his incarnation; the place of his birth; his offices; and the happiness and glory of his church, after triumphing over her enemies, in the latter day. His style is nervous and concise; sometimes obscure, but generally animated and poetical, resembling in many places that of Isaiah\*.

CHAPTER I.

Micah in this chapter shows the wrath of God against Israel and Judah for idolatry, and exhorts to mourning.

1 **T**HE word of the LORD that came to Micah the Morasthite in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, [and] Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem; *the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah, of which Samaria and Jerusalem were the capitals.*

2 Hear, all ye people; hearken, O earth, *or land*, and all that therein is: and let the Lord GOD be witness against you *of the faithfulness with which I have warned you, and the obstinacy with which you reject my message, even the LORD from his holy temple; that is, from heaven.* 3 For, behold, the LORD cometh north out of his place, and will come down, and read upon the high places of the earth; *he will shew his displeasure against your fortifications, by throwing them down, or against the idolatry practised in high places.* 4 And the mountains shall be molten under him, *as when he*

\* Dr. Smith.

*appeared in terror at mount Sinai, and the valleys shall be cleft as wax before the fire, [and] as the waters that are poured down a steep place. 5 For the transgression of Jacob [is] all this, and for the sins of the house of Israel. What [is] the transgression of Jacob? [is it] not Samaria? and what [are] the high places of Judah? [are they] not Jerusalem? the chief cause of their wickedness is, the ill example of their capital cities, and the princes there. 6 Therefore I will make Samaria as an heap of the field, [and] as plantings of a vineyard; like the hillocks on which vines are planted, and which in a few years are dug up and levelled; that is, it shall be utterly ruined by the Assyrians; and I will pour down the stones thereof into the valley, and I will discover the foundations thereof, that lay below the hill upon which Samaria was built. 7 And all the graven images thereof shall be beaten to pieces, and all the hires thereof, what they devoted to their idols, or imputed to them as their gifts, shall be burned with the fire, and all the idols thereof will I lay desolate: for she gathered [it] with the hire of an harlot, and they shall return to the hire of an harlot; their plunder shall go to enrich idolatrous nations. 8 Therefore I will wail and howl like a mourner, I will go stripped and naked, without an upper garment: I will make a wailing like the dragons, or foxes, and mourning as the owls, or ostriches, which make a fearful, shrieking, lamentable noise, as if they were in the greatest agonies\*. 9 For her wound [is] incurable; for it is come unto Judah, he is come unto the gate of my people, [even] to Jerusalem; a prediction of the siege of Jerusalem by Sennacherib.*

*10 Declare ye [it] not at Gath, weep ye not at all, lest your enemies should hear and triumph: in the house of Aphrah roll thyself in the dust, like deep mourners. 11 Pass ye away, thou inhabitant of Saphir, having thy shame naked, that is, in all the confusion and distress of captives: the inhabitant of Zaanan, in the tribe of Judah, came not forth in the mourning of Beth-ezel; a place near Jerusalem; each shall have so much to do for their own security, that they cannot help one another; he shall receive of you his standing; each shall see on what footing he stands, by observing what befalls his neighbour. For, or, although, the inhabitant of Maroth waited carefully for good: but evil came down from the LORD unto the gate of Jerusalem. 13 O thou inhabitant of Lachish, (the first town which Sennacherib attacked, (2 Kings xviii. 14.)), bind the chariot to the swift beast: she [is] the beginning of the sin to the daughter of Zion; was first perverted*

\* See Pococke, in loc.



to idolatry in the time of the Judges; *Lachish* is another name for *Dan*, where one of the calves was set up: for the transgressions of Israel, the idolatry and other sins of the ten tribes, were found in thee. 14 Therefore shalt thou give presents to *Moresheth-gath*, hire auxiliaries from the *Philistines*: the houses of *Achzib* [shall be] a lie to the kings of Israel; all the people thereof shall prove people of *Achzib*, that is, lying and deceitful to all that trust in them. 15 Yet will I bring an heir unto thee, O inhabitant of *Mareshah*, a stranger, an enemy, who shall possess thee: he shall come unto *Adullam* the glory of Israel; or, the glory of Israel shall come to *Adullam*; that is, their armies shall be glad to hide themselves there. 16 Make thee bald, and poll thee for thy delicate children, as mourners for thy children, who shall suffer great hardships; enlarge thy baldness as the eagle when he sheds his plumage; for they, thy children, are gone into captivity from thee.

## REFLECTIONS.

1. IT becomes all to pay the most serious attention to the word of the Lord: not only to the Bible, but to what his ministers say, as far as that is agreeable to it. They have the same demand to make, as in *v. 2.*, *Hear, all ye people.* All are required to hear, for all are equally concerned. God's authority extends to all alike. He is a witness of the fidelity and earnestness with which his messages are delivered, and will be a swift witness in the day of judgment against those who will not hear them. Let us seriously think of this, when going to the house of God, and when hearing his word there.

2. See how cautious persons in the higher ranks of life should be of their conduct; *v. 5.* The country followed the example of the city. When the heads of a town, a congregation, or family, are corrupt, or allow themselves in what is evil, their inferiors will be likely to follow their example, and to do as bad as they, probably worse. Superiors therefore have great need of caution, and should practise self-denial, that they may not ensnare others, and be accessory to their sin and ruin.

3. Observe how our hearts should be affected with the sins of others. The prophet here laments them, and the calamities which they brought upon his country, with the deepest mourning. This he did from a principle of piety and humanity; and to excite the people to a just sense of their danger, so as to lead them to

repentance. But at the same time that we mourn for the sins of others, (especially of God's professing people,) let us not publish their sin and shame. *Tell it not in Gath, lest the profane triumph; lest religion be reproached, and others take encouragement to do wickedly. Let us bewail the sins of others before God; and then we may hope for his grace to bring them to repentance; at least this pious disposition will increase our caution, lest we in like manner offend.*

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## CHAPTER II.

This chapter relates chiefly to Israel; it contains a denunciation against oppression; a lamentation; a reproof of injustice and idolatry; and a promise of restoring Jacob.

1 **W**OE to them that devise iniquity, and work evil upon their beds! when the morning is light, they practise it, because it is in the power of their hand, *and they think they have a right to do what they can.* 2 And they covet fields, and take [them] by violence; and houses, and take [them] away: so they oppress a man and his house, even a man and his heritage; *his houses and lands, so that his heirs are impoverished.* 3 Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, against this family, *or nation,* do I devise an evil, from which ye shall not remove your necks; neither shall ye go haughtily: for this time [is evil; *that is, a calamity which will bow you down, and which, haughty as you are, you cannot shake off.*

4 In that day shall [one] take up a parable against you, *an uncommon and striking speech,* and lament with a doleful lamentation, [and] say, We be utterly spoiled: he hath changed the portion of my people, *and given it to other possessors:* how hath he removed [it] from me! turning away he hath divided our fields. 5 Therefore thou shalt have none that shall cast a cord by lot; *whereas your country used to be measured, to adjust the division of the tribes, now it shall be divided among strangers,* in the congregation of the LORD. 6 Prophesy ye not, [say they to them that] prophesy: they shall not prophesy to them; *their sins shall be their punishment, God will no longer reprove and expostulate with them; [that] they shall not take shame; or rather, for he shall*

remove from himself reproaches; as if he had said, *The true prophet will subject himself to public disgrace by exercising his office\**.

7 O [thou that art] named the house of Jacob, is the spirit of the LORD straitened? [are] these his doings? *is he grown severe and cruel? does he delight in these things? do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly? if men behave well, they have nothing to fear from my words, but they will be comfortable to them; instead of threatenings, they will be messages of peace.*

8 Even of late my people is risen up as an enemy; referring to the invasion of Judah by Pekah king of Israel: ye pull off the robe with the garment, *that is, the upper and under garment, from them that pass by securely as men averse from war; ye plunder those that are peaceable, and not in arms.*

9 The women of my people have ye cast out from their pleasant houses; from their children have ye taken away my glory for ever; *ye have taken women and children captive, and sold them for slaves into idolatrous countries.*

10 Arise ye, and depart; for this [is] not [your] rest: because it is polluted, it shall destroy [you,] even with a sore destruction; *your land shall cast you out, as you have taken and sold them.*

11 If a man walking in the spirit and falsehood, do lie, [saying,] I will prophesy unto thee of wine and of strong drink; he shall even be the prophet of this people; *that is, if a man walking in the spirit of falsehood, a man of wind, puffed up with enthusiastical conceits, without a divine commission: yea, if a man of an abandoned character, who will get drunk with those to whom he prophesies; if such a one will foretell peace and plenty, they will be fond of him, and despise and hate my true prophets.*

12 I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of thee; I will surely gather the remnant of Israel; I will put them together as the sheep of Bozrah in Edom, *noted for fine pastures, as a flock in the midst of their fold: they shall make great noise by reason of [the multitude of] men; as a multitude of sheep do, when driven to the fold.*

13 The breaker is come up before them; *a pioneer shall go before them to clear the way: they have broken up, and have passed through the gate, and are gone out by it: and their king shall pass before them, and the LORD on the head of them; God will make a plain way for their settlement; he will go before, to guide and protect them; probably referring to God's leading them by the Messiah, and their believing in him.*

\* See Bp. Newton, in loc.

## REFLECTIONS.

1. SEE the natural and common progress of wickedness, in this people's love of money. They first coveted riches; then devised mischief, in order to acquire them; then were eager in the pursuit of them; they rose early in the morning to accomplish their designs; at length covetousness banished all compassion, and led them to injustice, violence, and oppression, till they stopped at nothing to get wealth, that they could do with safety to themselves. And this is still the usual course of every vice, especially of avarice; and it is just in God to take away the houses and estates which are so gotten. At least he will in righteousness devise final evil against the covetous, the unjust, and the cruel.

2. We may judge of men's characters by the manner in which they behave to God's ministers. Those that would *silence*, or that despise and slight faithful ministers; that hate plain and faithful preaching, and love that which soothes them, or which, by dealing only in generals, never gives their consciences any alarm in their evil ways, are in reality wicked hypocrites. If they walked uprightly, they would have nothing to fear from the word of God; and would value those ministers most, who most faithfully *declared the whole counsel of God*. To the truly upright his word speaks nothing but comfort and encouragement.

3. Those who deprive men of their liberty and religious advantages, take away their greatest glory, *v. 9*. Let parents esteem these the glory of their children; and endeavour for the sake of their posterity, to support the liberties of their country, and those religious services and forms of administration, which they think best adapted to promote the knowledge and piety of their offspring. Let parents seriously consider, that if they marry their children to those who have no religion, or only a form of godliness; or put them to be servants to such, in order, as they think, to increase their wealth and honour, they take away what God reckons their glory; and that, it may be, for ever; so that their children, and their children's children, may be eternal sufferers by their covetousness and folly. In all such cases, let the good of their children's souls be first consulted, and then they may hope that they will inherit a glory which will last for ever.

## CHAPTER III.

In this chapter the prophet inveighs with great boldness and spirit against the princes and prophets of Judah; and foretells the destruction of Jerusalem, as the consequence of their iniquity. The last verse is cited by Jeremiah, chap. xxvi. 18.

1 **AND** I said, Hear, I pray you, O heads of Jacob, and ye princes of the house of Israel; [Is it] not for you to know judgment? *may it not be expected from you? are you not inexcusable if it is otherwise?* 2 Who hate the good, and love the evil; who pluck off their skin from off them, and their flesh from off their bones; 3 Who also eat the flesh of my people, and flay their skin from off them; and they break their bones, and chop them in pieces, as for the pot, and as flesh within the caldron; *figurative expressions of the greatest oppression and cruelty.* 4 Then shall they, *those rich and cruel oppressors,* cry unto the LORD, but he will not hear them: he will even hide his face from them at that time, as they have behaved themselves ill in their doings; *as they have showed no pity, they shall find none.*

5 Thus saith the LORD concerning the prophets that make my people err, that bite with their teeth, and cry, Peace; and he that putteth not into their mouths, they even prepare war against him; *who, if they are not fed in a luxurious manner, declare vengeance on those who refuse to support them, or bring them into trouble by false accusations:* 6 Therefore night [shall be] unto you, that ye shall not have a vision; and it shall be dark unto you, that ye shall not divine; and the sun shall go down over the prophets, and the day shall be dark over them; *they shall live to see their own prophecies confuted, and dreadful calamities come upon their country.* 7 Then shall the seers be ashamed, and the diviners confounded: yea, they shall all cover their lips *with part of their garments, like mourners, or persons under disgrace and dejection;* for [there is] no answer of God.

8 But truly I am full of power by the spirit of the LORD, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin; *such is the contrast between me and these false prophets, that I am not afraid to deliver my message, however disagreeable.* 9 Hear this, I pray you, ye heads of the

house of Jacob, and princes of the house of Israel, that abhor judgment, and pervert all equity. 10 They build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity; *they pretend to increase the national wealth by slaying the innocent, and are really destroying the state by the very means they use to strengthen it.* 11 The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money; *all their leaders are mercenary, the judges take bribes, and the priests salaries, though otherwise well provided for by the law:* yet will they lean upon the LORD, and say, [Is] not the LORD among us? none evil can come upon us; *because of their profession, their temple, and ordinances, they think themselves secure.* 12 Therefore shall Zion for your sake be ploughed [as] a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, *as it actually was when destroyed by the Romans,* and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest, *that is, overgrown with grass and bushes.*

### REFLECTIONS.

1. LET us again reflect on the vengeance of God against oppressive and cruel people. Surely these are sins peculiarly provoking, when there are such repeated threatenings against them. Troubles shall come upon them, and they shall find no redress: as they regarded not the cry of the poor and the oppressed, so God will not regard theirs. If men behave ill in their doings, they must expect to fare ill; for the righteous Lord will not suffer the unjust and cruel to go unpunished.

2. See how boldly good men will speak and act, when the Spirit of God influences them. The judges, priests, and prophets of Israel were mean, mercenary, and unjust. But Micah had wisdom to discern truth and falsehood; courage to declare God's judgments against sinners; and feared not the face of the greatest of them. *The Spirit of the Lord* gave him this firmness. It is very needful for ministers, especially in a corrupt generation, when the leading men of a people set them bad examples, to maintain this spirit: and it should be our fervent prayer, that it may be poured out abundantly upon all christian ministers, that men may be brought to see their transgressions, and be led to repentance.

3. How common, and yet how shocking is it, to see the most wicked men trusting to their external privileges. Those infamous

men, in v. 11., cried, *Is not the Lord among us? none evil can come upon us.* So it is now; some of the vilest persons boast of their christian name, their relation to the church, and their zeal for it; and trust in those privileges for salvation which will only aggravate their ruin. Let us beware of this fatal error. It is to be feared that some among us build upon as false a bottom, as any of these wicked Jews did. But all who *lean upon the Lord*, without having real holiness, will certainly be disappointed in their expectations; and the greater their confidence is, the greater will be their shame and ruin.

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#### CHAPTER IV.

The prophet in this chapter foretells the glory, peace, and establishment of the Messiah's kingdom, and the final triumph of the church over all its enemies.

1 **BUT** in the last days, *in the time of the Messiah*, it shall come to pass, [that] the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains; *as the temple was built on a mountain, so the church shall be established on still surer grounds* (see Isaiah ii. 2.); and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it; *it shall become conspicuous, and the heathen shall be brought unto it.* 2 And many nations shall come, and say, *as the Jews were used to do at their solemn feasts*, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

3 And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; *that is, he will bring them under the discipline of his word or judgments*; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more; *referring to the universal peace when Christ was born, or to the pacific disposition which the Gospel will produce in the latter day.* 4 But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make [them] afraid; *every man shall securely enjoy his possessions*: for the mouth of the LORD of

hosts hath spoken [it.] 5 For all people will walk every one in the name of his god, *as idolaters now do*, and we will walk in the name of the LORD our God for ever and ever; *we will regard the authority and glory of Jehovah only, and that for ever.*

6 In that day, saith the LORD, will I assemble her that halteth, and I will gather her that is driven out, and her that I have afflicted; *I will recover the Jews from their dispersed, afflicted condition*; 7 And I will make her that halted a remnant, and her that was cast far off a strong nation; *a part of them shall be preserved, in whom the future designs of my providence shall be accomplished*: and the LORD shall reign over them in mount Zion from henceforth, even for ever. 8 And thou, O tower of the flock, O Jerusalem, the strong hold of the daughter of Zion\*, unto thee shall it come, even the first dominion, *equal to David's and Solomon's*; the kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem, *though now in an afflicted state.* 9 Now why dost thou cry out aloud? [is there] no king in thee? is thy counsellor perished? for pangs have taken thee as a woman in travail; *probably referring to the captivity of their kings, just before their own.* 10 Be in pain, and labour to bring forth, O daughter of Zion, like a woman in travail: for now shalt thou go forth out of the city, and thou shalt dwell in the field, and thou shalt go [even] to Babylon; there shalt thou be delivered; there the LORD shall redeem thee from the hand of thine enemies; *you have reason to be in pangs, for you shall be led out of your capital, and carried captive to Babylon; but from thence I will deliver you.*

11 Now also many nations are gathered against thee, that say, Let her be defiled, and let our eye look upon Zion, *let it delight itself with beholding their calamities; referring to the attempt of Sennacherib; he and his army desired to see that city destroyed, which was the head quarters of the religion which opposed their idolatry.* 12 But they know not the thoughts of the LORD, neither understand they his counsel; *the purpose of God to destroy Sennacherib's army*: for he shall gather them as the sheaves into the floor. 13 Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion: for I will make thine horn iron, and I will make thy hoofs brass: and thou shalt beat in pieces many people: and I will consecrate their gain unto the LORD, and their substance unto the LORD of the whole earth; *thou shalt trample on thine enemies with as much*

\* The tower of the flock, or, the tower of Eder, was a place near Bethlehem, where the shepherds used to keep watch in the midst of a large plain; here put for Jerusalem, to intimate that God would protect his people and feed them there.



*ease, as the ox treadeth out the corn, and take their spoil, and dedicate it to the temple of the Lord; which we have reason to believe Hezekiah did.*

## REFLECTIONS.

1. AMIDST the confusion of the nations, we have reason to rejoice that the gospel has been and will be supported in the world. Though Jerusalem is ruined, and the Jews dispersed, yet the church of God is still supported in one form and place or another. It went out from Zion, and, from a small beginning, became great. Let us attend to the hints of duty here given us; let us invite one another *to go up to the house of the Lord, to worship him, and to learn his ways.* Let us be united in these religious exercises; and engage in them with a determination to walk in God's ways; else all our worship and pretences to serve him will be reckoned hypocritical.

2. Let the incurable superstition of others, lead us to be resolute in the pure worship and service of our God. All people are fond of the religion of their fathers; whoever or whatever is their god, they will walk in his name; *v. 5.* And shall they be so resolute in walking in the ways of their false gods, and shall not we walk in the name of Jehovah our God for ever? Let us be careful to *learn his name;* engage in his service upon serious examination, and then be steady in his work; reverencing his authority, governing ourselves by his law, and doing this *for ever and ever.* We shall never find a better master, a more pleasant service, or a greater reward.

3. Let us learn from the example of the Israelites, *v. 13., to consecrate our gain to God;* remember, that *he is Lord of the whole earth,* who has a right to every thing we have. To his bounty and blessing we owe whatever we acquire. We are but stewards, and, as such, accountable to him for our gain; and therefore it ought to be employed for him, and made subservient to his glory, in supporting religion and doing good to others; by providing for the welfare of their bodies and souls. Then it will be *consecrated to the Lord, made holiness to him;* and *with such sacrifices he will be well pleased.*

## CHAPTER V.

The birth and kingdom of Christ are here foretold, and his complete conquest over all his adversaries.

1 **N**OW gather thyself in troops, O daughter of troops; *now let the Assyrian army be led on with all its troops: he hath laid siege against us; we have seen their encampments: they shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek; they have treated Hezekiah in the most contemptuous manner, nevertheless they shall be destroyed, and Jerusalem shall still continue.* 2 But thou, Beth-lehem Ephratah, [though] thou be little among the thousands of Judah, [yet] out of thee shall he come forth unto me [that is] to be ruler in Israel; *the Messiah shall be born there, and that shall make it famous; whose goings forth [have been] from of old, from everlasting; who existed long before his incarnation.* 3 Therefore, or, nevertheless, will he give them, Israel, up for a season, until the time [that] she which travaileth hath brought forth; *till the virgin mother hath brought forth her son, and the Gospel has been preached: then the remnant of his brethren, Christ's people in every nation, shall return unto the children of Israel, and the Gentiles be united to the believing Jews.*

4 And he shall stand and feed in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God; and they shall abide; *his church shall be safe and secure under his protection: for now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth.* 5 And this [man] shall be the peace, when the Assyrian shall come into our land; *referring to the latter day, and to the attack that shall be made on the Jews after their conversion and restoration; the Assyrian being put as a common name for any implacable enemy: and when he shall tread in our palaces, then shall we raise against him seven shepherds, and eight principal men; a competent number of considerable persons, who shall deliver us from our enemies.* 6 And they shall waste the land of Assyria with the sword, and the land of Nimrod in the entrances, or frontiers, thereof, *where the strongest garrisons are usually placed: thus shall he deliver [us] from the Assyrian, when he cometh into our land, and when he treadeth within our borders.* 7 And the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people as a dew from the LORD, as the

showers upon the grass, that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men; *as the falling of dew, which is not the effect of human thought and industry, refreshes the earth, so the converted Jews shall be a blessing to all about them, be instruments of bringing into the church the remaining unconverted Gentiles, and of reviving the Christian cause.—But they shall be terrible to their enemies.*

8 And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles in the midst of many people as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep: who, if he go through, both treadeth down, and teareth in pieces, and none can deliver; *all who, from enmity to the gospel, confederate against them, shall find them unconquerable, and be ruined by them.* 9 Thine hand shall be lifted up upon thine adversaries, and all thine enemies shall be cut off. 10 And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD, that I will cut off thy horses out of the midst of thee, and I will destroy thy chariots; *I will bring thee to an entire dependance upon me, and thou shalt no more trust in prohibited aids:* 11 And I will cut off the cities of thy land, and throw down all thy strong holds; *thou shalt not trust even in thy fortifications but in God himself, who will fully secure thee:* 12 And I will cut off witchcrafts, *or, thy sorcerers,* out of thine hand; and thou shalt have no [more] soothsayers: 13 Thy graven images also will I cut off, and thy standing images out of the midst of thee; and thou shalt no more worship the work of thine hands. 14 And I will pluck up thy groves out of the midst of thee: so will I destroy thy cities, *or rather, thine enemies\*.* 15 And I will execute vengeance in anger and fury upon the heathen, such as they have not heard; *or, who have not hearkened unto me: the meaning is, they shall become entirely obedient to God, trust in him alone, and be delivered from all their enemies.*

## REFLECTIONS.

1. LET us regard the Lord Jesus Christ in the instructive view here given of him. An illustrious prophecy, which has been most exactly accomplished. Let us reflect upon his high original; honour him as the Son of God; reverence his authority, as *the ruler of Israel, and the shepherd of his people;* who feeds,

\* Their conversion is here described by their renouncing all kinds of idolatry, because then they were much addicted to it; though they are not now.

instructs, and protects them. Let us commit ourselves to his care, submit to his laws, and trust in his power and grace to save us.

2. Let us reflect on the security of his church. He is its *peace*; when enemies rise, he will raise up shepherds to defend it. It shall abide, notwithstanding all attempts to destroy it; and spread to the ends of the earth; both Jews and heathens shall be brought into it. Let our faith receive and rejoice in these promises; and let them animate our prayers and our endeavours to advance his interest.

3. See what a blessing lively christians are to the places in which they live, *v. 7*. They refresh and make fruitful those about them. Their attempts to do good are vigorous and extensive; their exhortations, prayers, and examples, make them public blessings. But still it is the power and grace of God that make their attempts successful. In his strength let us exert ourselves to do good, and to promote the salvation and comfort of all around us.

4. See the sad consequences of opposing and despising the gospel. In what awful words does God express his determination to punish those who do so; *v. 15.*, *I will execute vengeance in anger and fury upon those, who, after so many wonderful events in the conversion of the Jews, will not hear.* And such, and even more severe, will be the punishment of those under a christian name, who have been educated in the principles of the gospel, who have it preached to them, and who profess to believe it, and yet *will not hear*, that is, will not obey it. The omniscient, almighty, holy Lord God, is not to be trifled with; and from a dread of his wrath, and a desire of his favour, let every soul, *hear, and be obedient.*

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## CHAPTER VI.

The prophet here returns to speak of his own times, and relates God's controversy for unkindness, ignorance, injustice, and idolatry.

1 **H**EAR ye now what the LORD saith; Arise, contend thou before the mountains, and let the hills hear thy voice. 2 Hear ye, O mountains, the LORD's controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth; *the hills and the mountains are addressed to*

*reprove the stupidity of the people: for the LORD hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel; he will argue the case with them, and convince them of the equity of his judgments.* 3 O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me; *what injustice or grievances have you to complain of?* 4 For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of servants; and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam *the prophetess,* (Exod. xv. 20.) 5 O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal, *from the encampment at Shittim,* (Numb. xxv. 1,) *on the way to that of Gilgal,* (Joshua iv. 19,) that ye may know the righteousness of the LORD; *or, that train of providences which attended the Israelites from their last encampment on the other side Jordan, to their taking possession of Canaan; particularly, their passing over Jordan; taking Jericho; renewing the covenant of circumcision, and dividing the land.—The people, alarmed by this representation, inquire,*

6 *Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, [and] bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? or, does he expect a more costly sacrifice?* 7 Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, [or] with ten thousands of rivers of oil? *oil attended their meat offerings: shall I give my first born, the dearest of my offspring, [for] my transgression, the fruit of my body [for] the sin of my soul\*?—The prophet answers,* 8 He hath showed thee, O man, *by reason and conscience, and his written law, what [is] good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God? in these he takes pleasure, and without these the most costly sacrifices will be detested.* 9 The LORD's voice crieth unto the city Jerusalem, and [the man of] wisdom shall see thy name, *shall learn what thou art: hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it.*

*If you see not the cause of your calamity, it is this;* 10 Are there yet the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked, and the scant measure [that is] abominable? *these are not put away, notwithstanding all the remonstrances of the prophets.* 11 Shall I count [them] pure with the wicked balances, and with the bag of deceitful weights? 12 For the rich men thereof are full of violence,

\* It is well known, that the Phœnicians, and their descendants the Carthaginians, sacrificed their children to Saturn, and some of the idolatrous Jews and Israelites imitated the horrid practice.—Bp. NEWCOMB.

and the inhabitants thereof have spoken lies, and their tongue [is] deceitful in their mouth. 13 Therefore also will I make [thee] sick in smiting thee, in making [thee] desolate because of thy sins; *I will give thee enough of such wicked practices; I will cause thee to waste away like a man in a consumption.* 14 Thou shalt eat, but not be satisfied, *thou shalt be disappointed in thy expectations;* and thy casting down [shall be] in the midst of thee, *thy calamities shall arise from thyself;* and thou shalt take hold of *thy wives, children, and substance,* but shalt not deliver; and [that] which thou deliverest will I give up to the sword. 15 Thou shalt sow, but thou shalt not reap; thou shalt tread the olives, but thou shalt not anoint thee with oil; and sweet wine, but shalt not drink wine; *this shall make thy disappointments the more grievous.*

*And the chief cause of all this is thy idolatry;* 16 For the statutes of Omri are kept, and all the works of the house of Ahab, and ye walk in their counsels; *you learn wickedness from the Israelites;* that I should make thee a desolation, and the inhabitants thereof an hissing; *you act as if you designed to provoke me to destroy you:* therefore ye shall bear the reproach of my people; *that is, worse reproach and greater punishment than any other people.*

### REFLECTIONS.

1. SEE how inexcusable sin against God is. He may plead with all the children of men, and with us in particular, as in v. 3., *O my people, what have I done unto thee, and wherein have I wearied thee? Testify against me.* We have no reasonable objections to make against his laws and institutions; no good reason to desert or neglect his services; especially when we reflect on his favours to us; how he hath delivered us from spiritual bondage by Christ, and given us teachers of his will. To which may be added, our national deliverances and blessings; all of which are intended to lead us to the knowledge of his righteousness, faithfulness, and goodness, and thereby to repentance and obedience. When God pleads with men, *they cannot answer for one sin in a thousand:* the only way to be safe and happy, is to make up the controversy. And we learn,

2. How this is to be done. It is an important inquiry, v. 6., *Wherewith shall I come before the Lord?* how make my peace with him, and obtain his favour? with what temper and in whose name, shall I approach him? Let us guard against trusting in

insufficient means, or hypocritical promises. Men will generally part with their substance, yea, with their children, rather than with their beloved lusts. God, in much kindness, *hath shown us what is good, viz., to do justly, to use no violence, oppression, or deceit in our dealings; to practise and love mercy, and to be humble before God,* that is, to submit to his laws and the appointments of his providence; which, to us who have the gospel, includes receiving Christ, and submitting to God's righteousness in him. It is thus alone we can hope for his favour.

3. We are taught the design of afflictions, and how careful we should be to comply with it. They are *the rod of God*, there is a voice attending them: they teach us many important truths, which are explained by his word and ministers. Let us from all *learn God's name*, that is, his nature and will. *He appoints the rod;* let us attend to the admonitions and cautions which it gives; and see his hand, and regard his design, in every affliction. By this shall we show that we are truly wise, and shall improve in wisdom.

4. It will be no excuse for men's disobedience to God, that they follow the customs of the age, of the great, or the wealthy. Iniquity was established in Israel by law, was countenanced by the house of Ahab, that is, by the royal family and courtiers: yet, being contrary to the law of the most High, it brought desolation upon the people. Let us study what the will of God is; not what others practise. Let those who make a solemn profession of religion be especially careful that they be not led away by evil customs and fashions; if they are, *they will bear the reproach of God's people*, that is, greater shame and punishment, than if they had never known his ways, or professed to walk in them.

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## CHAPTER VII.

The church, complaining of her small number, and the general corruption, putteth her confidence, not in man, but in God.

1 **W**OE is me! for I am as when they have gathered the summer fruits, as the grape gleanings of the vintage: [there is] no cluster to eat: my soul desired the first ripe fruit; *I am as a poor hungry man come into a vineyard, who finds nothing to eat, no*

*gleanings left : for* 2 The good [man] is perished out of the earth : and [there is] none upright among men : they all lie in wait for blood : they hunt every man his brother with a net, *as they do wild beasts.*

3 That they may do evil with both hands earnestly, the prince asketh, and the judge [asketh] for a reward ; and the great [man,] *who wishes to gain his cause against his honest neighbour,* he uttereth his mischievous desire : so they wrap it up ; *twine it together, like a threefold cord, and so support their injustice and violence.* 4 The best of them [is] a brier : the most upright [is sharper] than a thorn hedge ; *he that has any thing to do with them will suffer by them :* the day of thy watchmen, *the day that thy watchmen or prophets have foretold,* [and] thy visitation cometh ; now shall be their perplexity.

5 Trust ye not in a friend, put ye not confidence in a guide, *who pretends to assist you :* keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom ; *that is, from thy wife ; for, such is the universal degeneracy, that even she will betray her husband.* 6 For the son dishonoureth the father, the daughter riseth up against her mother, the daughter in law against her mother in law ; a man's enemies [are] the men of his own house ; *a passage applied by our Lord to the Jews in his time, Matt. x. 35, 36.* 7 Therefore I will look unto the LORD ; I will wait for the God of my salvation : my God will hear me.

8 Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy : when, *or, though* I fall, I shall arise ; when, *or, though* I sit in darkness, the LORD [shall be] a light unto me. 9 I will bear the indignation of the LORD, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me : he will bring me forth to the light, [and] I shall behold his righteousness. 10 Then [she that is] mine enemy shall see [it,] and shame shall cover her which said unto me, Where is the LORD thy God ? mine eyes shall behold her : now shall she be trodden down as the mire of the streets ; *referring to Babylon, or to any idolatrous persecuting power.* 11 [In] the day that thy walls are to be built, *that is, when thou returnest from Chaldea,* [in] that day shall the decree be far removed, *the decree of God for thy captivity.* 12 [In] that day [also] he shall come even to thee from Assyria, and [from] the fortified cities, and from the fortress, *that is, Egypt,* even to the river, and from sea to sea, and [from] mountain to mountain ; *the Jews shall be brought back from captivity and dispersion in every place, to their own land.* 13 Notwithstanding the land shall be,



or, after that it hath been, desolate because of them that dwell therein, for the fruit of their doings; that is, as a punishment for their sins.

14 Feed thy people with thy rod, the flock of thine heritage, which dwell solitarily [in] the wood, in the midst of Carmel: let them feed [in] Bashan and Gilead, as in the days of old; let them be restored to their own land from their present solitary, dispersed state. This is the prophet's prayer for Israel; to which God answers:

15 According to the days of thy coming out of the land of Egypt will I show unto him marvellous things; I will do as great things for them as I then did; referring probably to the latter day.

16 The nations shall see and be confounded at all their might, at the might of the Jews: they shall lay [their] hand upon [their] mouth, their ears shall be deaf; they shall be stupified with astonishment. 17 They shall lick the dust like a serpent, be humbled and confounded, they shall move out of their holes like worms of the earth, that soon draw in and hide their heads again: they shall be afraid of the LORD our God, and shall fear because of thee.

18 Who [is] a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth [in] mercy.

19 He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea, like Pharaoh and his hosts. 20 Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, [and] the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old: the grant of Canaan was pure mercy to Abraham, but truth to Jacob, because it was grounded on the promise made to Abraham.

## REFLECTIONS.

1. THE declension of piety and zeal in a people ought to be the grief of all good men. It is lamentable to see professors of religion becoming bad, and acting dishonourably; children of pious parents degenerating; and families losing that appearance of religion, which had long been supported in them. And we here see the consequences of this declension: when piety is gone, no friendship is to be expected; no confidence to be put, even in relatives; domestic and social duties are neglected; and the comfort of every relation lost. Let us lay this to heart, and be so

much the more vigorous in our attempts to do good, and so much the more careful to be *blameless and harmless, as sons of God, without rebuke even in a crooked and perverse generation.*

2. In times of the greatest degeneracy, let us still *look to God, and wait for him.* Our best efforts will not avail, without his help. Let us rely upon him to guide and protect us. If men are bad, he is good; if they are false, he is faithful; in him we may find support in every situation; he can redress every grievance; preserve us in the most general corruption; encourage us amidst the greatest scorn of the wicked; and, when we *sit in the deepest darkness, he will be light unto us.*

3. A serious remembrance of our sins will tend to promote our patience and submission. *I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him.* Afflictions are sometimes the effect of God's indignation; and the cause is sin. This is a sufficient reason why we should bear them patiently, without murmuring and complaining; and *humble ourselves under his mighty hand.* Where sin is felt as heavy, affliction will be thought light. Those who are impatient and complaining, see but little of *the plague of their own hearts.* But if we have humbled hearts under humbling providences, we may hope that God *will plead our cause, and bring us forth to the light, so that we shall behold his righteousness.*

4. We have great reason to admire and adore the wonderful mercy of God. It is incomparable mercy: he forgives, and none forgives like him. There are none against whom offences so great and aggravated can be committed; yet he pardons penitents, and shows mercy to them, and delights in it. He forgives their sins, all their sins, *casts them into the depths of the sea, from whence they shall never rise, so as to be seen any more.* And where he forgives iniquities, he will subdue them; he will take away their dominion, as well as their guilt. This is great encouragement to penitent sinners to ask mercy through Christ Jesus; the mercy promised to the fathers. Whoever obtains that mercy will see abundant reason to say, *Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, transgression, and sin.*

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THE BOOK OF  
THE PROPHET NAHUM.

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INTRODUCTION.

NINEVEH being spared upon their repentance at the preaching of Jonah, it should seem, afterwards returned to the practice of their former sins; adding also the oppression of the people of God; whereupon God, for the comfort of his people, sends Nahum to foretell her ruin, and the ruin of the Assyrian monarchy, and, consequently, the Jews' deliverance, who were captivated by them: thus comforting them in their present miseries, according to his name, which signifies, a comforter. He is supposed to have lived in the reign of Hezekiah, and about ninety years later than Jonah. The destruction of Nineveh took place about sixty years after the prophecy; when the Medes and Babylonians, under Cyaxares and Nebopolassar, rebelled together, and overturned the Assyrian empire.—Perhaps none of the lesser prophets equal Nahum in sublimity, fire, and boldness of spirit: his prophecy is one entire poem, relating almost wholly to the destruction of Nineveh; the capital of that people who carried away ten of the tribes captive, and greatly harassed the other two\*.

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CHAPTER I.

The majesty of God is here displayed, in goodness to his people, and severity against his enemies.

1 **THE** burden of Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite; so called, from a village in Galilee. 2 God [is] jealous of his own honour and the welfare of his people, and the LORD revengeth; the LORD revengeth, and [is] furious; or rather, he is Lord of his wrath, not subject to passion, but commands it as he pleaseth; the LORD will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth [wrath,] or indignation, for his enemies. 3 The LORD [is] slow to anger, as the Ninevites themselves

\* Dr. Smith.

*had lately experienced*, and great in power, and will not at all acquit [the wicked:] the LORD [hath] his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet; *an allusion to his descent upon mount Sinai*, (Psalm civ. 3.) 4 He rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry, and drieth up all the rivers: Bashan languisheth, and Carmel, and the flower of Lebanon languisheth *by excessive heat or drought*. 5 The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at his presence, yea, the world, and all that dwell therein. 6 Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him. *Yet* 7 The LORD [is] good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him; *he approveth, and will defend them*. 8 But with an overrunning flood, *an invading enemy*, he will make an utter end of the place thereof, *of Nineveh*, and darkness shall pursue his enemies\*. 9 What do ye imagine against the LORD? *referring to the conduct and treatment of the Assyrians in Hezekiah's time*; he will make an utter end of those that rise up against him: *why then are you so foolish as to enter into contrivances against him and his people; thinking to destroy Judah, as you have done Israel?* affliction shall not rise up the second time; *he will do his work at once, so that he shall have no need to rise again*. 10 For while [they be] folden together [as] thorns, *in the closest and strongest confederacy*, and while they are drunken [as] drunkards, *intoxicated with their former success*, they shall be devoured as stubble fully dry. 11 There is [one] come out of thee, that imagineth evil against the LORD, *Sennacherib*, a wicked counsellor; *an outrageous, licentious person, whose counsels and projects tend only to mischief*. 12 Thus saith the LORD; Though [they be] quiet and *prosperous*, and likewise many, yet thus shall they be cut down, when he shall pass through to *invade Judea*: Though I have afflicted thee, I will afflict thee no more; *there shall be no more such alarms in Hezekiah's reign*. 13 For now will I break his yoke from off thee, and will burst thy bonds in sunder; *thou shalt be no longer tributary to the Assyrians*. 14 And the LORD hath given a commandment concerning thee, *O Assyrian empire*, [that] no more of thy name be sown†: out of the house of thy gods will I cut

\* Here may be an allusion to the manner in which Nineveh was taken: the Euphrates overflowed its banks, deluged a part of the city, and overturned twenty stadia of the wall; in consequence of which, the desponding king burnt himself, his palace, and treasures.—DION. SIC. l. ii. sect. 22.

† This is an express prophecy that Sennacherib and his whole posterity should

off the graven image and the molten image: I will make thy grave; for thou art vile; *thou shalt be slain in the house of thy god; all thy idols shall not save thee; for, thou hast been a vile persecutor of my people, and an oppressor of all.* 15 Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace! *an address to Jerusalem; O Judah, keep thy solemn feasts, perform thy vows, which Hezekiah and the people have made: for the wicked, this wicked one, shall no more pass through thee; he is utterly cut off.*

## REFLECTIONS.

1. FROM the awful description which is here given of the power and wrath of this almighty and terrible Being, we should be led to reverence and adore him. *Who can stand before his indignation?* When he determines to punish and destroy, what is great Nineveh, and the vast Assyrian empire? What is any man, or kingdom, before him? Let us *stand in awe* therefore, and *not sin*. But while we feel his power and justice, let us remember, that he is not revengeful and passionate, but Lord of his anger; it is always under his control; and always just and right: and his almighty power is continually employed for the security and supply of those that trust in him: his goodness shall never forsake his servants.

2. It is a great comfort to God's people, that he knows and can defeat every design which is formed against his and their interest. Much evil is imagined against the Lord, and his people and cause in the world; more than ever appears. Sometimes he defeats the design, by secretly cutting off the enemy; and sometimes by openly defeating him. He is able at once to destroy all opposing power and politics, and hath often done it. No wisdom, counsel, or might, can succeed against him.

3. When God delivers us from our enemies, and restores our peace, he expects and requires that we should worship and serve him. *O Judah, keep thy solemn feasts, perform thy vows.* The goodness of God to us, in giving us national peace and prosperity, should engage us to value and love his ordinances, to be thankful for our solemn feasts; and diligently to observe them. Our

be cut off. His successor, indeed, had a long and prosperous reign; but in the time of his grandson (who might be born when this prophecy was delivered) the city of Nineveh, and the empire of the Assyrians, were destroyed; so that there were no additions to his family, or, if there were, they were then cut off.

prayers and humiliations, in the time of war and danger, were vows; and we ought to perform what we then promised: else our case will be, like that of Nineveh, only a reprieve: the destruction will be more dreadful for having been a while suspended: and *the end will be with a flood*. But this is our comfort, that if we trust in God, *he is good; he will be a strong hold in the day of trouble*, and the everlasting portion of his servants.

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## CHAPTER II.

This chapter is a prophecy of the conquest of Nineveh, which happened about twenty-four years before the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebopolassar, the father of Nebuchadnezzar, and Cyaxares, or, as he is called in scripture, Ahasuerus, king of the Medes, who united their forces against Nineveh.

1 **H**E that dasheth in pieces, or, as the marginal reading is, *the disperser, or the hammer*, is come up before thy face to destroy thy fortifications and inhabitants: keep the munition, strengthen the garrisons, watch the way which thy galleys pass, make [thy] loins strong, fortify thy power mightily: O Assyrian, use all the means thou canst possibly, to secure thyself. 2 For the LORD hath turned away the excellency, or pride, of Jacob, as the excellency of Israel: *God will avenge thy pride and haughtiness against Israel on thy capital city*: for the emptiers have emptied them out, and marred their vine branches; *destroyed the products of the present, and the hopes of future years*. 3 The shield of his mighty men is made red, the valiant men [are] in scarlet; *the usual dress of military men*: the chariots [shall be] with flaming torches in the day of his preparation, and the fir trees, that is, *the spears and lances, though so numerous as to be like a moving wood*, shall be terribly shaken. 4 The chariots shall rage in the streets, they shall jostle one against another in the broad ways: they shall seem like torches, they shall run like the lightnings, *by reason of their multitude, haste, and fury*. 5 He shall recount his worthies; *the Chaldean monarch shall muster up and pick out his choicest commanders and soldiers for this enterprise*: they shall stumble in their walk; they shall make haste to the wall thereof, and the defence shall be prepared; *though they shall come when they are*

called, yet they shall be of little use; though they attempt to defend the place, yet it shall be in vain. 6 The gates of the rivers shall be opened, and the palace shall be dissolved; the river Tigris, by continued rains, shall swell and break down the wall, so that the besiegers shall enter at the breach\*. 7 And Huzzab, that is, the city, shall be led away captive †, she shall be brought up, and her maids shall lead [her,] like a queen retiring with her maids of honour, as with the voice of doves, tabering upon their breasts; that is, mourning, and beating their breasts in the greatest distress. 8 But Nineveh [is] of old like a pool of water; surrounded by those canals, which were formed to make the city inaccessible: yet they shall flee away. Stand, stand, [shall they cry;] that is, their commanders shall cry, but none shall look back. 9 Take ye the spoil of silver, take the spoil of gold: for [there is] none end of the store [and] glory out of all the pleasant furniture ‡. 10 She is empty, and void, and waste; and the heart melteth, and the knees smite together, and much pain [is] in all loins, and the faces of them all gather blackness; though long in plundering, she shall be emptied at last, and the inhabitants have no heart to defend themselves. 11 Where [is] the dwelling of the lions, and the feeding place of the young lions? where are the inhabitants of Nineveh, who were strong and rapacious, like lions? where the lion, [even] the old lion, walked, [and] the lion's whelp, and none made [them] afraid? that is, the tyrannical princes who preyed upon their neighbours and enriched themselves with their spoils. 12 The lion did tear in pieces enough for his whelps, and strangled for his lionesses, and filled his holes with prey, and his dens with ravin; the Assyrians have long been very successful, and plundered many provinces and cities, and there are as many marks of this, as there are of rapine in a lion's den. 13 Behold, I [am] against thee, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will burn her chariots in the smoke, and the sword shall devour thy young lions; and I will cut off thy prey from the earth, and the voice of thy messengers shall no more be heard to encourage their allies, and terrify their enemies; they shall no more hector other nations, as they have the Jews.

\* See Note, chap. i. verse 8.

† Huzzab signifies a place strongly fortified, and refers to the city itself.

‡ Heathen historians mention the prodigious spoils that were found in Nineveh when taken.

## REFLECTIONS.

1. SEE how insignificant all the power and strength of man is, when it is opposed to God. Nineveh was a large and populous city, of three days' journey, (that is, sixty miles,) in circumference in Jonah's time, about a hundred years before this prophecy was delivered; and so populous, that there were an hundred and twenty thousand young children in it: and the inhabitants were probably now increased. They made great preparations to defend themselves; and are here ironically called upon to exert their utmost efforts; but all was in vain. God can easily disappoint the mightiest, and confound all that they devise for their security. Who would not then fear this great Being, and labour to secure his friendship?

2. Observe, in v. 9., the vanity and uncertainty of worldly wealth. The riches of the Ninevites made the enemy more desirous to take the city; and, when taken, their disappointment the greater. So precarious is it, that we may say of the world, as God did of Nineveh, *It is empty and void*, unable to supply the wants, and satisfy the desires of immortal souls; and those who trust in it will find, that it cannot secure them from death and destruction. If we have our portion in this life, our faces will gather blackness when God calls us to our final account.

3. We are here shown the sad consequence of men's providing for their families by injustice; v. 12. Many now plead the largeness of their families, and the provision they must make for them, to excuse their covetousness, injustice, and impiety, their selling and travelling on the sabbath, and other irregularities, in contempt of God's commands, and in distrust of his providence: and it is but just in him to take their substance from them, or from their children. Whereas justice, charity, and piety, are the surest and safest means of success, and of obtaining the blessing of God with it.

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## CHAPTER III.

In which the miserable ruin of Nineveh is foretold.

1 **W**OE to the bloody city! it [is] all full of lies [and] robbery; the prey departeth not; *their great men shed innocent blood, still increasing their wealth by their spoil; and the destroying enemy is coming;* 2 The noise of a whip, and the noise of the rattling of the wheels, and of the prancing horses, and of the jumping, *or bounding,* chariots. 3 The horseman lifteth up both the bright sword and the glittering spear: and [there is] a multitude of slain, and a great number of carcasses; and [there is] none end of [their] corpses; they stumble upon their corpses: 4 Because of the multitude of the whoredoms of the well favoured harlot, the mistress of witchcrafts, that selleth nations through her whoredoms, and families through her witchcrafts \*. 5 Behold, I [am] against thee, saith the LORD of hosts; and I will discover thy skirts upon thy face, and I will show the nations thy nakedness, and the kingdoms thy shame; *that is, thou shalt be taken captive, and exposed to shame: an allusion to the custom of exposing captives, and especially harlots, naked.* 6 And I will cast abominable filth upon thee, *as harlots, who were sometimes pelted with dirt,* and make thee vile, and will set thee as a gazing-stock. 7 And it shall come to pass, [that] all they that look upon thee shall flee from thee, *refusing to help thee,* and say, Nineveh is laid waste: who will bemoan her? *as hired mourners at a funeral.* Whence shall I seek comforters for thee? 8 Art thou better than populous No, that was situate among the rivers, [that had] the waters round about it, whose rampart [was] the sea, [and] her wall [was] from the sea? *that is, Ammon, or Thebes, (a fine city in Egypt,) famous for its hundred gates, and the temple of Jupiter Ammon †.* 9 Ethiopia and Egypt [were] her strength, and [it was] infinite; Put and Lubim, *the neighbouring nations of Africa,* were thy helpers. 10 Yet [was] she carried away, she went into captivity: her

\* The Ninevites were notorious for their luxury and effeminacy, by which they corrupted other nations, and thereby rendered them so weak as to become an easy prey to themselves or other invaders.

† Sennacherib took and destroyed this city before he attacked Jerusalem, as was foretold by Isaiah, (ch. xx. 4.) it was defended by the river Nile and the lakes about it.

young children also were dashed in pieces at the top of all the streets: and they cast lots for her honourable men, *who should have them to sell for slaves*, and all her great men were bound in chains. 11 Thou, *Nineveh*, also shalt be drunken; thou shalt be hid, *buried in obscurity*, thou also shalt seek strength, *call for the assistance of allies*, because of the enemy. 12 All thy strong holds [shall be like] fig trees with the first ripe figs: if they be shaken, they shall even fall into the mouth of the eater; *thou shalt as easily yield to the first assault, as the ripest figs fall when the tree is shaken*. 13 Behold, thy people in the midst of thee [are] women; *weak, and faint-hearted*: the gates of thy land shall be set wide open unto thine enemies; *the places where they enter shall be defenceless*: the fire shall devour thy bars. 14 Draw thee waters for the siege, *fill all thy reservoirs, lest the river should be cut off*; fortify thy strong holds: go into clay, and tread the mortar, make strong the brick kiln. 15 *There, or, then, while thou art making preparation for thy defence*, shall the fire of *God's wrath, and the rage of thine enemy*, devour thee; the sword shall cut thee off, it shall eat thee up like the canker-worm: make thyself many as the canker-worm, make thyself many as the locusts. 16 Thou hast multiplied thy merchants above the stars of heaven: *though thine is a populous and rich city, yet the canker-worm spoileth, and flieth away; thine enemies shall be as numerous as locusts*. 17 Thy crowned, *thy princes and officers*, [are] as the locusts, and thy captains as the great grasshoppers, which camp, *or, shelter themselves*, in the hedges in the cold day, [but] when the sun ariseth they flee away, and their place is not known where they [are;] *so thy leaders, though many, shall all be scattered when the enemy comes*. 18 Thy shepherds slumber, O king of Assyria: thy nobles, *who should have taken care of the army*, shall dwell [in the dust;] *or, in sloth*: thy people is scattered upon the mountains, and no man gathereth them; *thy tributary princes shall desert thee in the time of thy distress; as they really did*. 19 [There is] no healing of thy bruise; thy wound is grievous: all that hear the bruit, *or report*, of thee shall clap the hands over thee; for upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually? *thou hast abused and insulted all thy neighbours, yea, the God of Israel himself, therefore they shall join to insult thee*.

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## REFLECTIONS.

1. OBSERVE how dangerous it is to learn the follies of other nations; v. 4. By her bewitching luxury and effeminacy, Nineveh weakened other nations, and then brought them under her own dominions. And it appears not to be improbable that this may be the case of our country, in consequence of our prevailing fondness for foreign dresses and vanities, which, besides being highly impolitic, and injurious to trade, tends to make us a weak, effeminate people: so that we may possibly be sold to them as a nation, as many families are already ruined by their witchcrafts, and many others seem to be tending toward it.

2. See the dreadful doom of the unjust and cruel. Nineveh was a bloody, rapacious city; and when her time came to fall, her allies forsook her, her enemies insulted her, and there was none to assist and comfort her. The fall of this great city, reads a lesson to those private persons who are increasing their wealth by fraud and oppression; who behave in an haughty, insolent manner to their workmen, dependants, and other inferiors. They are preparing enemies for themselves; and if God should see good to punish them in this world, (as he often does,) they will have none to pity them, but many to help forward and rejoice in their ruin. Every man who consults his own prosperity, safety, and peace, should not only act in an upright, honourable manner, but behave with meekness and kindness to all.

3. It is good often to remind ourselves that we are not better than others, v. 8.; so as to excite a holy fear of God's judgments, when we hear of them as visiting others. Are we better than they? better than other good men, who have endured even greater afflictions? Pride is the source of impatience, murmuring, and discontent; and he who desires to bear and improve his afflictions right, should take care to *be clothed with humility, and not think of himself more highly than he ought to think.*

THE BOOK OF  
THE PROPHET HABAKKUK.

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INTRODUCTION.

THERE is no account of this prophet handed down to us: he probably lived in the time of Josiah, as his prophecy nearly resembles that part of Jeremiah's which was delivered in his reign. Bp. Newcome thinks he may be placed in the reign of Jehoiakim, between the years 606 and 598, before Christ. He foretells the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem, and also the ruin of their enemies the Chaldeans. Whoever reads this prophecy, must be struck with the grandeur of its imagery, and the sublimity of its style, especially of the hymn, or prayer, in the third chapter, which hardly any thing of the kind can be supposed to excel.

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CHAPTER I.

Habakkuk, complaining of the iniquity of the land, is showed the fearful judgments which were to be inflicted by the Chaldeans.

**1** **THE** burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see; *or, the important, weighty message he was to deliver.* **2** **O** **LORD**, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! [even] cry unto thee [of] violence, and thou wilt not save! *I am puzzled by the prosperity of the wicked, notwithstanding their violence and injustice, and the continued supplications of thy faithful servants. A difficulty common to good men in every age.* **3** Why dost thou show me iniquity, and cause [we] to behold grievance? for spoiling and violence [are] before me: and there are [that] raise up strife and contention. **4** Therefore the law is slacked, *its nerves are unbraced*, and judgment doth never go forth: for the wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore wrong judgment proceedeth. *To this objection against his providence, God answers;*

**5** Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvellously: for I will work a work in your days, [which] ye will not

believe, though it be told [you,] *that such a nation as Israel should be destroyed, and by their own God.* 6 For lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, [that] bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwelling places [that are] not theirs. 7 They [are] terrible and dreadful: their judgment and their dignity shall proceed of themselves; *they will submit to no law, neither do they regard right or wrong.* 8 Their horses also are swifter than the leopards, *who, when tamed and taught to hunt, (as in Palestine) seize the prey with surprising agility, often springing seventeen or eighteen feet at a time\**, and are more fierce than the evening wolves *when they go out to seek their prey*: and their horsemen shall spread themselves, and their horsemen shall come from far; they shall fly as the eagle [that] hasteth to eat. 9 They shall come all for violence: their faces shall sup up [as] the east wind; *their presence shall be as mischievous to you, as the east wind is to plants*; and they shall gather the captivity as the sand; *shall take away many captives.* 10 And they shall scoff at the kings, *at all the opposition which the kings and princes of Judea, or any of their confederates, can make against them*, and the princes [shall be] a scorn unto them; *Nebuchadnezzar shall conquer many kings, and nations*: they shall deride every strong hold; for they shall heap dust, *or, raise a little rampart of earth*, and take it; *or, take it as easily as a person can heap up dust.* 11 Then shall [his] mind change, and he shall pass over, and offend; *Nebuchadnezzar first ascribed it to God, but afterwards grew proud, and exceeded all the bounds of moderation, [imputing] this his power unto his god Bel; or, making his strength his god.* —*The prophet then addresses himself to the Almighty:*

12 [Art] thou not from everlasting, O LORD my God, mine Holy One? we shall not die; *shall not be utterly destroyed, or have our name blotted out by these Chaldeans, who are under thy control*: O LORD, thou hast ordained them for judgment; and, O mighty God, thou hast established them for correction, *even while thou makest them prosper.* 13 [Thou art] of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity: wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, [and] holdest thy tongue, *seemest to connive at them*, when the wicked devoureth [the man that is] more righteous than he? 14 And makest men as the fishes of the sea, as the creeping things [that have] no ruler over them? *the Chaldeans shall take great and small captive, as men catch fishes, or tread on creeping things.* 15 They take up all of them

\* See HARMER'S *Observ.*, vol. ii. p. 438.

with the angle, they catch them in their net, and gather them in their drag: therefore they rejoice and are glad. 16 Therefore they sacrifice unto their net, and burn incense unto their drag, *or net*; because by them their portion [is] fat, and their meat plenteous; *ascribing all their victories and success to their own power and policy, which is as absurd and impious, as for a fisherman when successful to worship his net.* 17 Shall they therefore empty their net of one nation they have subdued and plundered, and then fill it again? and not spare continually to slay the nations? *This is the prophet's expostulation, and we have God's answer in the next chapter.*

### REFLECTIONS.

1. WE should review this chapter with great thankfulness that the sad case which it describes is not that of our own country; that we have not a terrible nation raised up against us, to *march through the breadth of the land to destroy it.* We have great reason to fear this, when we consider how much *the law is slackened*, and how much strife and contention abound, especially among our great men. It is wonderful patience in God, that while there is so much iniquity, there is so little grief among us: but *it is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed.*

2. Let us learn to maintain a deep sense of the perfections and glory of God. Let us think of him, as the eternal Jehovah, the guardian of his church and interests, which shall not therefore die and be lost: he may ordain enemies to correct his people, but they shall not be destroyed. Let us especially think of him as the Holy One. *He beholds iniquity*; he cannot but see it; but he sees it with detestation; it is as hateful to him, as those things are to us which we cannot bear the sight of. Though he may use the worst of men to correct his people, yet he abhors them. Though he may seem to connive at sin, by bearing long with sinners, yet he will certainly punish it. Let us be careful never to entertain light thoughts of sin; but reverence the perfect holiness of God, who will *judge the world in righteousness.*

3. We should be careful never to arrogate any part of our success to ourselves. This was the case of the Chaldeans, and is the case of many christians. When men get rich, and their schemes prosper, they are apt to be *lifted up*; to *forget God*, and to say, *My might, and the power of my hand, hath done it.* But this is as absurd, as it would be for a fisherman to idolize and adore the

net with which he caught his fish. Yet how generally do men in effect sacrifice to their own skill, and burn incense to their own industry! yea, very often to their own dishonesty. There is a great proneness in our corrupt nature to self-glorying, and to idolize our own abilities and exertions. Let us carefully restrain and watch against the workings of this very absurd and criminal pride; and *let him that glorieth, glory in the Lord.*

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## CHAPTER II.

In the former chapter we had the prophet's expostulation concerning the success of the Chaldeans against Israel: in this, we have God's answer. The prophet begins, as usual, with a prediction of the Messiah; and recommends faith to his people, as their support: and then foretells the destruction of the Chaldeans.

1 **I** WILL stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me: *as a watchman intent upon his office, so I will earnestly look for God's word, (Ezek. iii. 17.)* and what I shall answer when I am reproved, *to those that question the truth of my predictions.*

2 And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision as most important, and make [it] plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it; *alluding to the custom of hanging laws upon pillars or public buildings, which were written so plain, that he who took only a cursory view might read and understand them.—The two following verses are probably a prophecy of the Messiah.* 3 For the vision [is] yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, *or break forth with surprising light and glory,* and not lie, *or deceive:* though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry; *that is, God in due time will make good the great promise of deliverance given to our fathers, as the last word, rendered tarry, intimates.* 4 Behold, his soul [which] is lifted up; *that is, proud, or impatient,* is not upright in him: *as if he had said, If a person will not wait for the vision, but throw up his profession of religion, he shows a very bad spirit\*:* but the just shall live by his faith; *he shall be supported by faith; or, he that is*

\* The words may be rendered agreeably to the apostle's quotation, (Heb. x. 38.), *If any man draw back, or turn aside, my soul cannot take pleasure in him.*

*justified by faith shall live. Accordingly the apostle quotes it as applicable to the gospel way of justification by believing; Rom. i. 17.*

5 Yea also, because he transgresseth by wine, [he is] a proud man; *the man transgressing by wine is proud, intoxicated with success like drunken men, referring to the Chaldeans; neither keepeth at home, who enlargeth his desire as hell, and [is] as death, and cannot be satisfied, but gathereth unto him all nations, and heapeth unto him all people; through pride and ambition they seek to enlarge their dominions, and increase their slaves and tributaries:* 6 Shall not all these take up a parable against him, and a taunting proverb against him, and say, Woe to him that increaseth [that which is] not his! *wealth unjustly gained; how long? and to him that ladeth himself with thick clay! or, how long will he lade himself with thick clay, with riches, which, like thick clay, defile a man, retard his motions, and add weight to his sin and punishment.* 7 Shall they not rise up suddenly that shall Lite thee, and awake that shall vex thee, and thou shalt be for booties unto them? *to the Medes and Persians, who, like furious beasts shall tear thee to pieces?* 8 Because thou hast spoiled many nations, all the remnant of the people shall spoil thee; because of men's blood shed by thee, and [for] the violence of the land, of the city of Judah and Jerusalem, and of all that dwell therein.

9 Woe to him that coveteth an evil covetousness, *or, gaineth an evil gain, to his house, (which Nebuchadnezzar strove to aggrandize,) that he may set his nest on high, like an eagle, that he may be delivered from the power of evil, and in no danger of an attack!* 10 Thou hast consulted shame to thy house by cutting off many people, *hast taken the direct method to bring infamy and ruin on thy family, and hast sinned [against] thy soul, or life.* 11 For the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it; *the materials of your stately palaces shall cry to God for vengeance against you; saying,*

12 Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood, and stablisheth a city by iniquity! *that is, Nebuchadnezzar, who hath raised Babylon to its grandeur by the ruin of other great cities.* 13 Behold, [is it] not of the LORD of hosts that the people shall labour in *or for* the very fire, and the people shall weary themselves for very vanity? *for that which shall be fuel to the fire which shall consume thy stately buildings?* 14 For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea; *the spread of religious knowledge, or, of the*



*glory of God, shall be the consequence of the destruction of the Chaldean monarchy.*

15 Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that putteth thy bottle to [him,] and maketh [him] drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness! *comparing the king of Babylon to a debauchee who makes others drunk to see their shame, so he intoxicated the nations with his politics that he might gain the advantage over them.* 16 Thou art filled with shame for, *or, instead of,* glory: drink thou also, and let thy foreskin be uncovered; *or, (as in the Syriac version,) be seized with trembling or astonishment:* the cup of the LORD'S right hand shall be turned unto thee, *it shall come round to you in its turn,* and shameful spewing, *or pollution,* [shall be] on thy glory; *the divine judgments shall overtake thee, and thy people shall be stripped and carried captive: accordingly, the city of Babylon was destroyed in the midst of a drunken revel.* 17 For the violence of Lebanon shall cover thee, *the violence done to the temple, which was built of cedars from Lebanon,* and the spoil of beasts, [which] made them afraid, because of men's blood, and for the violence of the land, of the city, and of all that dwell therein; *such violence and cruelty as you have exercised against Judah and Jerusalem, its temple and inhabitants, shall be repaid into your own bosom.*

18 What profiteth the graven image that the maker thereof hath graven it; the molten image, and a teacher of lies, *that leads men to absurd and false dependencies,* that the maker of his work trusteth therein, to make [him] dumb idols, *which they will find unable to help them?* 19 Woe unto him that saith to the wood, Awake; to the dumb stone, Arise, it shall teach, *that is, give forth oracles and directions.* Behold, it [is] laid over with gold and silver, and [there is] no breath at all in the midst of it. 20 But the LORD [is] in his holy temple, let all the earth keep silence before him; *though the temple of Jerusalem is in ruins, our God has a temple in the heavens; there he sits enthroned in majesty and glory; and let the whole earth reverently adore him, and wait his time to interpose for his people.*

## REFLECTIONS.

1. FROM hence we should learn patience in waiting for the discoveries of providence, and the fulfilment of scripture prophecies. Habakkuk watched to see what God would say. Thus should

we wait for a solution of the difficulties of providence, and the accomplishment of prophecies; carefully studying what God has declared, and attentively observing what he is doing. He has fixed a time for the manifestation of himself, and that is the best time. The reasonable expectations of his people shall not be disappointed; *for he is a God of judgment, and blessed are all they that wait for him.*

2. Let us bless God for the gospel, which was revealed in due time, and receive it by faith; v. 4, 5. A passage which is often quoted in the New Testament, to show the method of justification under the gospel dispensation, and the influence which faith has upon the christian's heart and life. Let us then receive the gospel; venture our souls upon the promises of God, and keep near to him in the most trying times. Then we shall live, and our hearts be supported and quieted. But if men are proud and impatient; if *their hearts be lifted up, if they will turn aside, and draw back,* they have no principle of grace, and *God will have no pleasure in them.* While these important things are made so plain, let us be careful that we neither mistake them, nor disregard them.

3. Let us resolutely guard against those vices which have such dreadful woes denounced against them. We are in little danger of direct idolatry. The papists indeed lock up the scriptures, and call images the laymen's books; but they are teachers of lies. And let us remember that *covetousness is idolatry,* and that there are awful denunciations against it. Men naturally love riches; but they are often only like thick clay, defile and encumber them. Their ambition is to advance their families, and enlarge their substance; and when that is the governing principle, they run into oppression and injustice; they *increase that which is not theirs.* Their desires enlarge with their wealth, and they are never satisfied. They encroach upon their neighbours; endeavour to engross all trade and commerce to themselves; and thus they *sin against their own souls;* yea, often *trouble their houses,* destroy domestic comfort, and ruin their families, which they are ambitious to enrich and aggrandize. *Woe also to drunkards!* who force or tempt men to drink to excess, that they may expose and make sport with them, or lead them to make ill bargains. Men may call this a frolic; but God will give such wretches *a cup of trembling and fury to drink,* and expose their shame and wickedness to the whole assembled world. Let us be alarmed by these woes, and endeavour to *be sober, temperate, and contented, in all things.*

4. We are here taught to approach the living God with the greatest reverence, v. 20.; silently to adore his power and providence, and never censure his dispensations; but with calm submission of soul wait his time to interpose. When we appear before him, let it be with the deepest veneration of mind, and the utmost seriousness of spirit; for *he is greatly to be feared, and to be had in reverence of all those that draw nigh unto him.*

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### CHAPTER III.

The prophet in this chapter recounts God's ancient works done for Israel, and from thence concludes, that he will make good his promises to their posterity.

1 **A PRAYER**, or, *poetical oration*, of Habakkuk the prophet upon Shigionoth; or, *according to variable songs or tunes, called in Hebrew, Shigionoth.* 2 O LORD, I have heard thy speech, *thy threatened judgments*, (ch. i. 5, &c.,) [and] was afraid: O LORD, revive thy work in the midst of the years, *that is, while we continue in captivity, let not religion be lost in a strange land*; in the midst of the years make known *thy providence, thy power, and thy faithfulness to thy promises*; in wrath remember mercy\*.

3 God came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount Paran; *mountains of Edom, from whence the glory seemed to come to mount Sinai.* Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise. 4 And [his] brightness, *the rays coming from the Shekinah*, was as the light; he had horns, or *streaming rays*, [coming] out of his hand, and there [was] the hiding of his power; *he had stronger rays, and brighter glories concealed, which mortals could not bear.* 5 Before him went the pestilence, (*alluding probably to the plagues of Egypt*,) and burning coals, or *flakes of fire*, went forth at his feet; *intimating how easily, suddenly, and effectually he had destroyed, and would again destroy, his and his people's enemies.* 6 He stood, *without moving from place to place*, and measured the earth, *divided the promised land among his people, like a mighty conqueror*: he beheld, and drove asunder the seven nations of Canaan by his frown, and the

\* This God did, and answered this prayer by preserving Israel while captives, and curing them of their idolatry; and by his appearances for Daniel and his companions, and for Esther and her people.

everlasting mountains were scattered, *or, broken asunder*, the perpetual hills did bow, *when he clave the rock asunder for water, and especially when Sinai trembled and shook*: his ways [are] everlasting; *therefore we may hope for the same favours again.* 7 I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction: [and] the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble; *the Midianites and Arabians were terrified at Israel's approach.* 8 Was the LORD displeased against the rivers? [was] thine anger against the rivers? [was] thy wrath against the sea, that thou didst ride upon thine horses [and] thy chariots of salvation? *God might seem to be angry, as a mighty warrior, but it was all for the salvation of his people.* 9 Thy bow was made quite naked, *drawn out of its case*, [according] to the oaths of the tribes, [even thy] word; *according to thy promise to give the land of Canaan to the Israelites.* Selah. Thou didst cleave the earth with rivers. 10 The mountains saw thee, [and] they trembled: the overflowing of the water passed by: the deep uttered his voice, [and] lifted up his hands on high; *the waters, as if affrighted, lifted up their waves with a great noise, and rose, like a man who climbs up on an ascent by his hand.* 11 The sun [and] moon stood still in their habitation: at the light of thine arrows they went, [and] at the shining of thy glittering spear; *an allusion to the giving of signals in battle by shooting an arrow, or lifting up a spear; thus God gave them a sign when to stop, and when to go forward.* 12 Thou didst march through the land in indignation, thou didst thresh, *or, tread down*, the heathen in anger. 13 Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people, [even] for salvation with thine anointed; *with Moses, Aaron, Joshua, and others, who were instruments of delivering Israel*; thou woundedst the head out of the house of the wicked, *thou didst destroy the confederate princes of Canaan, by discovering the foundation unto the neck, or, by laying bare the foundations to the rock; that is, by exposing them to destruction, from the greatest to the least, from the highest to the lowest.* 14 Thou didst strike through with his staves the head of his villages; *that is, the captains, or warriors*; they came out as a whirlwind to scatter me: their rejoicing [was] as to devour the poor secretly; *they were cruel, and confident of success.* 15 Thou didst walk through the sea with thine horses, [through] the heap of great waters. 16 When I heard *these relations of thy judgments*, my belly trembled; my lips quivered at the voice: rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself, *I was like a person seized with a violent distemper, and began to sink*, that I might rest in the day of trouble: when he cometh up unto the

people, he will invade them with his troops; or, nevertheless I shall rest in the day of trouble; that is, though God goes on to bring punishments on a sinful people; though the Chaldeans come and carry us captive, yet I am still persuaded of his majesty and power, and shall find enough in him to comfort me.

17 Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither [shall] fruit [be] in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and [there shall be] no herd in the stalls; though aggravating calamities meet each other, by invading enemies, or the immediate hand of God, 18 Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation. 19 The LORD God [is] my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' [feet,] and he will make me to walk upon my high places; he will restore my former strength for war, and raise sufficient fortifications about me. To the chief singer on my stringed instruments. This poetical oration was to be used in the temple service, probably by order of Josiah, to encourage the faith and hope of Israel.

### REFLECTIONS.

1. SEE of how much importance it is, that we recollect and make familiar to our minds the perfections of God, and his appearances for his people. The prophet here reviews God's ancient and wonderful works in favour of his people, and describes them in most sublime poetical language, to impress the hearts of his degenerate people. And it is proper that we should consider these things, that we may have a deep conviction of the providence and power of Jehovah; that all nature and its elements are under his command; that he can easily confound all his enemies, and save his people in the most distressing circumstances. *He is a God above all gods: let us learn to reverence and adore him, who is glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders.*

2. When we recollect what God did for his ancient people, it should lead us to pray and hope that he will *revive his work*. This is the great thing we should be solicitous about. It is a most important petition, and especially necessary now his cause is sunk low; there is little piety or real charity to be found among us: few christians are faithful, fewer still are active and zealous. Let us earnestly pray, that God would support religion; that he would quicken the spirits of his faithful servants; comfort them under persecution and oppression, and make them *zealous in every good*

*word and work.* Our faith may be encouraged in such prayers and hopes, by recollecting what he has done; and considering that when his work seems dying, or even dead, he can revive it, so that *our souls shall rejoice in him.*

3. How comfortable is it to have God for our portion and happiness, when earthly comforts fail us, and to be able to rejoice in him in such circumstances. It is a melancholy case which the prophet here describes; *v. 17.* Earthly supports gone; prospect for the next year sunk; every thing dark and melancholy. If this should be the case with us, still, if true christians, we may rest in God, and have quietness within in the day of trouble: yea, we may *joy and rejoice in him. He is the God of salvation.* The everlasting salvation of his people is secure; and all their temporal losses and disappointments shall be overruled, to prepare them for it, and to make it more welcome and delightful.

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THE BOOK OF  
THE PROPHET ZEPHANIAH.

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INTRODUCTION.

ZEPHANIAH was one of the last prophets who prophesied before the captivity. He foretells the utter desolation of Jerusalem and Judea by the Chaldeans, thereby to stir them up, if it were possible to repentance, that they might prevent this judgment: to which therefore he exhorts them; and the rather, in regard of the sore judgments that were to be inflicted upon the neighbouring nations for their sins, which therefore should be a warning to them: but finding them incorrigible, he reproves them again; and then concludes with gracious promises concerning their conversion and restoration to their own land in the latter day. He prophesied much about the time that Jeremiah entered on his prophetic office, before Christ, from 640 to 609, and in his method and subject resembles him.

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CHAPTER I.

Contains a prophecy of God's severe judgment against Judah for divers sins.

1 **T**HE word of the LORD which came unto Zephaniah the son of Cushi, the son of Gedaliah, the son of Amariah, the son of Hizkiah, in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah.

2 I will utterly consume all [things] from off the land, saith the LORD; *an abrupt beginning, expressive of the certainty and importance of his predictions.* 3 I will consume man and beast, I will consume the fowls of the heaven, and the fishes of the sea, and the stumbling-blocks with the wicked; and I will cut off man from off the land, saith the LORD; *figurative expressions, denoting universal desolation.* 4 I will also stretch out mine hand upon Judah, and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, *who are under peculiar obligations to me;* and I will cut off the remnant of Baal from this place, *the remaining places and altars that had escaped Josiah's reformation,* [and] the name of the Chemarims, *the idola-*

trous priests or sacrificers, (Hos. x. 5.), with the priests; *those of the Levites my priests that joined with them*; 5 And them that worship the host of heaven upon the house tops; and them that worship [and] that swear by the LORD, and that swear by Malcham, or Moloch; *as swearing is an appeal to God, it is an act of religious worship; to swear by idols, therefore, is idolatry*; 6 And them that are turned back from the LORD; and [those] that have not sought the LORD, nor inquired for him; *who have forsaken God, and neglected religion*. 7 Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord God; *with silent reverence adore him, and submit to his judgments*: for the day of the LORD [is] at hand: for the LORD hath prepared you for a sacrifice, he hath bid his guests; *the Chaldeans to slay, and the birds and beasts of prey to devour the carcasses*. 8 And it shall come to pass in the day of the LORD's sacrifice, that I will punish the princes, and the king's children, *who by their example and authority have encouraged idolatry*, and all such as are clothed with strange apparel, *such as was used by worshippers of idols*. 9 In the same day also will I punish all those that leap on the threshold, which fill their masters' houses with violence and deceit; *that is, those who invade their neighbours' houses and rights, as most understand it; or rather, I think, the worshippers of Dagon, whose priests never trod on the thresholds of their temples, but leaped over them*. 10 And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD, [that there shall be] the noise of a cry from the fish gate, and an howling from the second city, and a great crashing from the hills, *from the cutting down of wood to make instruments for the siege*. 11 Howl, ye inhabitants of Maktesh, *(a valley in Jerusalem, which divided the upper from the lower city, a place of trade or exchange)*, for all the merchant people are cut down; all they that bear silver are cut off. 12 And it shall come to pass at that time, [that] I will search Jerusalem with candles, *I will make a strict scrutiny by the Chaldeans, and find out their treasures*, and punish the men that are settled on their lees: that say in their heart, the LORD will not do good, neither will he do evil. 13 Therefore their goods shall become a booty, and their houses a desolation: they shall also build houses, but not inhabit [them;] and they shall plant vineyards, but not drink the wine thereof. 14 The great day of the LORD [is] near, [it is] near, and hasteth greatly, [even] the voice of the day of the LORD: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. 15 That day [is] a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess,



a day of clouds and thick darkness, 16 A day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers. 17 And I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, *who know not where to go to be safe; they shall be in a state of the greatest anxiety and danger*, because they have sinned against the LORD: and their blood shall be poured out as dust, and their flesh as the dung. 18 Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the LORD's wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy: for he shall make even a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land.

## REFLECTIONS.

1. FROM hence let us learn particularly to watch against all those things for which God was so displeased with his ancient people; such as injustice, filling our houses with violence and deceit; the love of vain mirth and pleasure; being *settled on our lees*, so as to fear no danger. Let us guard against being divided between God and sin; *v. 5*. This is the case of many now; they think to compound matters with God, by serving him and mammon at the same time. But all such are offensive to him; especially those who forsake religion, who begin well, but afterwards run into the gaieties and follies of life; who, after solemn professions and vows, *turn back from the Lord*. Yea, he will punish those who *never sought the Lord, nor inquired for him*; who do not study his will, and pray to him; but live destitute of religion. These crimes of Israel are here specified for our admonition.

2. Let us guard against those bad principles, which lead to these bad dispositions and practices. *I will punish the men that are settled on their lees; that say in their hearts, The Lord doeth no good, neither doeth he evil*: here was the source of their wickedness. They were infidels, who denied the providence and moral government of God, and presumed that, however they might sin, God would not interfere to punish them. When men persuade themselves that God does not observe their sins, or is not so displeased with them as to punish them, and therefore despise the admonitions of his word and ministers, there is little hope of their reformation: it is not to be wondered at if they run into all kinds of vice. But when the day of scrutiny comes, God will *search them out, and punish them*. Therefore let us reflect,

3. How awful the day of the LORD is, and what a terrible thing

it will be to have his wrath against us. What an affecting view is here given us of the desolation of Judah and Jerusalem, though they were God's peculiar people. Such calamities may come upon our nation, and probably will, if those vices which appear among us are suffered to continue and increase. Let us read this account, and think with ourselves, 'If God's vengeance on a wicked nation is so dreadful, how terrible will be the day of judgment; when he will punish all the wicked of the earth with everlasting destruction.' *And seeing we look for such a day, let us seriously consider, what manner of persons we ought to be, in all holy conversation and godliness.*

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## CHAPTER II.

Contains an exhortation to repentance; the judgment of the Philistines, of Moab and Ammon, of Ethiopia and Assyria, who were all to be subdued by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, about the time of his conquest of Judea.

1 **GATHER** yourselves together, yea, gather together, *to humble yourselves, or recollect yourselves, O nation not desired; that is, not yet brought to repentance, or, not deserving of any favour;* 2 Before the decree bring forth, *or be executed,* [before] the day pass as the chaff, before the fierce anger of the LORD come upon you, before the day of the LORD's anger come upon you; *before that day come which shall bring such dreadful calamities as shall drive you like chaff before the wind.* 3 Seek ye the LORD, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness; *be humbled under a sense of your sins and a fear of God's wrath:* it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD's anger; *you may possibly by these means even yet deliver yourselves, though not your country.*

4 For Gaza shall be forsaken, and Ashkelon a desolation: they shall drive out Ashdod at the noon day, *by an open attack, and not by stratagem,* and Ekron shall be rooted up. 5 Woe unto the inhabitants of the sea coasts, the nation of the Cherethites, *part of the Philistines!* the word of the LORD [is] against you; O Canaan, the land of the Philistines, *that part of it which of right belongs to the Jews, though you keep it unjustly from them,* I will even destroy thee, that there shall be no inhabitant. 6 And

the sea coast shall be dwellings [and] cottages for shepherds, and folds for flocks; *a proverbial expression of utter desolation.* 7 And the coast shall be for the remnant of the house of Judah; they shall feed thereupon: in the houses of Ashkelon shall they lie down in the evening: for the LORD their God shall visit them, and turn away their captivity; *when the Jews return, they shall possess that country, and have settled habitations there.*

8 I have heard the reproach of Moab, and the revilings of the children of Ammon, whereby they have reproached my people, and magnified [themselves] against their border; *invaded their country, and cruelly used them.* 9 Therefore [as] I live, saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Surely Moab, *who descended from Lot,* shall be as Sodom, and the children of Ammon as Gomorrah, [even] the breeding of nettles, and salt-pits, and a perpetual desolation: the residue of my people shall spoil them, and the remnant of my people shall possess them; *a prediction fulfilled partly by Nebuchadnezzar, and finally by the Maccabees.* 10 This shall they have for their pride, because they have reproached and magnified [themselves] against the people of the LORD of hosts. 11 The LORD [will be] terrible unto them: for he will famish all the gods of the earth; *they shall have no worshippers, their sacrifices, which were absurdly thought to be their food, shall cease;* and [men] shall worship him, every one from his place, [even] all the isles of the heathen; *that is, the western and the maritime countries, or, all Europe, the continents of Asia and Africa.*

12 Ye Ethiopians also, ye [shall be] slain by my sword.

13 And he will stretch out his hand against the north, and destroy Assyria; and will make Nineveh a desolation, [and] dry like a wilderness. 14 And flocks shall lie down in the midst of her, all the beasts of the nations, *that is, all nations, or, all kinds of wild beasts:* both the [cormorant,] *or pelican,* and the bittern shall lodge in the upper lintels of it; *birds which fed in the Tigris, and made their nests in the deserted ruins of Nineveh;* [their] voice shall sing in the windows; desolation [shall be] in the thresholds: for he shall uncover the cedar work; *their finest carved ornaments.* 15 This [is] the rejoicing city that dwelt carelessly, *in ease, pleasure, and presumption,* that said in her heart, I [am,] and [there is] none besides me: how is she become a desolation, a place for beasts to lie down<sup>o</sup> in! every one that passeth by her shall hiss, [and] wag his hand.

## REFLECTIONS.

1. It becomes all men to humble themselves under the judgments of God. When national calamities are threatened or inflicted, or when individuals are under affliction, they should recollect themselves, turn inward and inquire of their own hearts, *why God contendeth with them?* and especially should those do so, whose prevailing sin is pride. *The word of the Lord is against them*, ver. 5. It is therefore time to humble themselves; and it will be their interest as well as duty to do it, *before the dreadful day of judgment comes, when the wicked shall be like chaff driven before the wind.*

2. Observe what honour God puts on the meek: on those who are humble in their own eyes; sensible of the evil of sin; submissive, and penitent under divine rebukes, and who have sincerely done his will. God will be favourable to them, and hide them, on earth, or in heaven. But they should continue to seek meekness; there is still room to improve; let them therefore strive to excel more and more. They may possibly be instruments of saving their country; but, if not, at least *they will save their own souls.*

3. Let us pray for the more complete accomplishment of this prophecy of the destruction of idolatry, v. 11. It is already in some measure accomplished in these isles; but it is a prophecy of the more extensive spread of the gospel, when men shall pray every where, without any distinction of place, to Jehovah alone. And let us observe here the great design of the gospel, even to bring men to worship him, and him only. Those who neglect his worship, are either ignorant of, or neglect the leading designs of, the gospel. Let us earnestly pray, that idolatry may be abolished, and that *men may every where worship the Father in spirit and in truth.*

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## CHAPTER III.

IN this chapter Jerusalem is reproved for its sins, and a promise is given of a general restoration of the Jews in the latter day.

1 **W**OE to her that is filthy and polluted, to the oppressing city! 2 She obeyed not the voice; she received not correction; she trusted not in the LORD; she drew not near to her God. 3 Her princes within her [are] roaring lions; her judges [are] evening wolves; they gnaw not the bones till the morrow; *they devour the prey entirely, and do not leave the bones till morning.* 4 Her prophets [are] light, *vain and trifling*, [and] treacherous persons, *who come to the temple from their idolatrous services*: her priests have polluted the sanctuary, they have done violence to the law; *neglected the distinction between clean and unclean, and yet presumed upon God's being among them.* But the prophet adds, 5 The just LORD [is] in the midst thereof; he will not do iniquity; *he will not be a partner in your crimes*: every morning doth he bring his judgment to light, he faileth not; *he holds his court early every morning, and makes his justice apparent*; but the unjust knoweth no shame; *they grow impudent and obstinate in their sin.* 6 I have cut off the nations; *both Nineveh and the ten tribes*: their towers are desolate; I made their streets waste, that none passeth by: their cities are destroyed, so that there is no man, that there is none inhabitant. 7 I said, *after the manner of men*, Surely thou wilt fear me, *these judgments on neighbouring nations must be effectual to thy repentance and reformation*; thou wilt receive instruction; so their dwelling should not be cut off, howsoever I punished them; *so that, though punished, they might not be entirely ruined and their cities destroyed*: but *I was disappointed, for they became zealous idolaters, and more generally vicious*, they rose early, [and] corrupted all their doings.

8 Therefore, *or, nevertheless*, wait ye upon me, saith the LORD, until the day that I rise up to the prey: for my determination [is] to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, [even] all my fierce anger: for all the earth, *that is, all the enemies of my church*, shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy. 9 For then will I turn, *or restore*, to the people a pure language, *sanctified hearts and lips*, that they may

all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one consent, *with one shoulder; an allusion to beasts drawing in teams.* 10 From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia my suppliants, [even] the daughter of my dispersed, shall bring mine offering. 11 In that day shalt thou not be ashamed for all thy doings, wherein thou hast transgressed against me; *thou shalt not be put to shame on account of them, nor be continued under the reproach and punishment of them:* for then I will take away out of the midst of thee them that rejoice in thy pride, and thou shalt no more be haughty because of my holy mountain; *I will take away those hypocrites, who boasted in their temple, and of their being the people of God.* 12 I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, *a people meek and poor in spirit,* and they shall trust in the name of the LORD. 13 The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies; neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth; *there shall be no more idolatry nor deceit among them:* for they shall feed and lie down, *like the sheep of God's pasture,* and none shall make [them] afraid; *they shall be safe under his protection.*

14 Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem. 15 The LORD hath taken away thy judgments, he hath cast out thine enemy: the King of Israel, [even] the LORD [is] in the midst of thee, by *manifest tokens of his presence and favour:* thou shalt not see evil any more. 16 In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, *God will say it by his providence and promises,* Fear thou not: [and to] Zion, Let not thine hands be slack; *perform thy duty with diligence and cheerfulness, and God will strengthen thee in an extraordinary manner.* 17 The LORD thy God in the midst of thee [is] mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest, *or, be silent,* in his love; he will joy, *or exult,* over thee with singing; *he will view thee with a transport which cannot be uttered; and when the transport subsides, he will break forth into a song of exultation. What a wonderful and delightful representation!* 18 I will gather [them that are] sorrowful for the solemn assembly, *for the want of ordinances,* [who] are of thee, *the true members of the church,* to [whom] the reproach of it, *wherewith their enemies upbraided them,* was a burden. 19 Behold, at that time I will undo all that afflict thee: and I will save her that halteth, and gather her that was driven out; and I will get them praise and fame in every land where they have been put to shame. 20 At that time will I bring you [again,] even in the time that I gather you:

for I will make you a name and a praise among all people of the earth, when I turn back your captivity before your eyes, saith the LORD; *when the Jews shall be converted and restored to their own land, there shall be such evident tokens of God's care in collecting and protecting them, and in punishing their irreconcilable enemies, as shall be greatly to their honour, and lead all the world to admire and adore the providence of their God.*

## REFLECTIONS.

1. AN habitual sense of God's holiness is the most effectual preservative against sin. Jerusalem was grown corrupt; she regarded neither God's instructions, nor his corrections: but neglected his ordinances, and slighted his word. The reason was, because they forgot that *the just Lord was in the midst of them.* They boasted that God was with them, (as many now rely on their privileges,) but forgot his purity and justice. Let us be careful to remember that this God is an holy and righteous Being, who will not connive at iniquity, even in those whose privileges or professions are most distinguished: *be ye therefore holy, for he is holy.*

2. How solicitous should we be not to disappoint God's reasonable expectations from us; *v. 7.* We are here taught what God's design is in public judgments, and in afflicting others, namely, that we may *learn to fear him;* let us then *receive this instruction.* If we do not, his end is defeated, his anger provoked, and we may assuredly expect *to be cut off.*

3. We are shown upon what terms we are to expect the favour and blessing of God. We must maintain purity of language, in opposition to every thing that is profane, false, or indecent; a good conversation; that is, piety, and seriousness in our discourse; union of hearts in his service; exhorting, assisting, and quickening one another; meekness and humility, which will lead to trust in God, and to be gentle to all men; and particularly a regard to his worship and ordinances; calling upon his name, and frequenting the solemn assembly; grieving at any thing that detains us from it, or that brings a reproach upon it. When God intends salvation for his people, this will be their character; and it is necessary for every one, who desires that his own soul may be saved in the day of the Lord.

4. How condescending is God thus to *rejoice over his people,* and how careful should they be to rejoice in him. We have one of

the most animating, delightful, and amazing passages in scripture, in v. 17.: God represents himself as in silent transport, rejoicing over the conversion of sinners, and in the happiness of his people; and at length, as expressing his joy by singing. How much more will this be the case at the great day, when he shall gather together all his people, *a multitude which cannot be numbered, and make them a name and a praise.* Let his servants greatly and constantly rejoice in him, especially in solemn assemblies for his worship, and in all their religious services: for *this joy of the Lord will be their strength.*

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THE BOOK OF  
THE PROPHET HAGGAI.

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HAGGAI is the first of the three prophets who were sent to the Jews after their return from the Babylonish captivity. He lived about five hundred and twenty years before Christ, and about fifteen years after Cyrus's grant of release and commission to rebuild the temple; in which work they were too negligent, till roused by this prophet. Ezra vii. 11., &c.

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CHAPTER I.

In this chapter Haggai, reproves the negligence of the people, incites them to build the house, and promises God's assistance.

1 **I**N the second year of Darius the king, *the son of Hystaspes, the third of the Persian kings from Cyrus*, in the sixth month, in the first day of the month, came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet unto Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, *and grandson of Jeconiah king of Judah*, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high-priest, *who was carried captive with Zedekiah*, saying,

2 Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, This people say, The time is not come, the time that the LORD's house should be built; *we have yet neither leisure nor substance to do it; nor encouragement from the Persian court; the restraints are not yet taken away.* 3 Then came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet, saying, 4 [Is it] time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, *which you find time and money to erect for yourselves*, and this house [lie] waste? 5 Now therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways; *the impropriety of your conduct after my extraordinary interposition in your behalf.* 6 Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; *you plead that you have not enough for yourselves and families, as your excuse for neglecting to build my temple; while this very neglect prevents*

*your prosperity: ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages [to put it] into a bag with holes; what you get does you no good, but a secret curse consumes it, v. 9.*

7 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways. 8 Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the LORD; *I will own you as my people, and accept this as done for my glory.* 9 Ye looked for much, and, lo, [it came] to little; and when ye brought [it] home, I did blow upon it, *by vermin, or mould.* Why? saith the LORD of hosts. Because of mine house that [is] waste, and ye run every man unto his own house. 10 Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed [from] her fruit. 11 And I called for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the corn, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil, and upon [that] which the ground bringeth forth, and upon men, and upon cattle, and upon all the labour of the hands; *all suffered by the violent heat.*

12 Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the LORD their God had sent him, and the people did fear before the LORD; *they feared his displeasure, and therefore set to work.* 13 Then spake Haggai the LORD's messenger in the LORD's message unto the people, saying, I [am] with you, saith the LORD; *to pardon what is past, and prosper your labours in this work.*

14 And the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and did work in the house of the LORD of hosts, their God; *with one heart, and great resolution,* 15 In the four and twentieth day of the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king, *and about three weeks after they had received their commission.*

## REFLECTIONS.

1. *CONSIDERATION of our ways* is a great friend to true religion. We have reflecting powers, and ought to employ them in the examination of our moral and religious conduct and character. Every part of religion has the highest reason on its side. Wicked-

ness, and even neglects of duty, are owing to the want of thought. *My people doth not consider* what way they are walking in, or where it will end. Let us apply our minds to this great duty, and *prove our own works.* *I thought on my ways,* saith the Psalmist, *and turned my feet to thy testimonies.*

2. God is highly displeased, when men are so intent on their worldly concerns as to neglect his house and glory. Strange conduct in the Jews, just after their return, that they could find time and money to build fine houses, while the house of God was left in ruins. It shows a great contempt of God and religion, when men think no cost and finery too much about their own houses, and the meanest accommodations good enough for God's house; when they scruple no expense in dress and diet, yet complain of charitable applications, and being saddled with expenses for God's cause and glory: and God often blasts the designs of such worldly people; their affairs succeed the worse for neglecting devotion and charity. Some unexpected disappointment often sweeps away the substance which they have withholden from God and his service.

3. Our success in worldly affairs, and our comfort in every creature, depend upon a divine blessing. The changes of weather, on which our supplies so much depend, are in God's hand. On his providence it depends whether the seed shall come up, or ripen: and when it is gathered, he can blow upon it and blast it: or, *we may eat, and not be satisfied.* *Man liveth not by bread alone:* therefore let us acknowledge God in all our ways, and seek his blessing; and in order to obtain that, we should abound in the exercises of piety and charity.

4. God exercises a secret influence on the minds of men, by which he can stir them up to what is great and good. The prophet preached; his reasons were strong, and his arguments forcible: but *God stirred up their spirits.* All convictions of the reasonableness and importance of duty will be insufficient, without this. Vain is the labour of ordinary ministers, or even of prophets, unless this influence of God concurs. We see the necessity therefore of fervent prayer, if we desire to do good to others, or reap advantage ourselves by the means of grace.

5. If we faithfully attempt to build up God's temple, *he will be with us,* ver. 13. A short encouragement, but sufficient; for it comprehends every thing. It is encouragement to ministers, *to edify the saints;* to parents, *to build up their children as spiritual temples;* and to all, *to edify one another.* If we attempt this

with vigour and despatch. *God will strengthen our hands, and prosper our work.* Let us then, *be up, and doing, and the Lord will be with us.*

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## CHAPTER II.

Haggai in this chapter encourages the people to the work, by a promise of greater glory to the second temple than was in the first.

1 **I**N the seventh [month,] in the one and twentieth [day] of the month, came the word of the LORD by the prophet Haggai, saying, 2 Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and to the residue of the people, saying, 3 Who [is] left among you that saw this house in her first glory? and how do ye see it now? [is it] not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing\*? 4 Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the LORD; and be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedech, the high priest; and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the LORD, and work: for I [am] with you, saith the LORD of hosts: 5 [According to] the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, *that is, to return to you, if you would return to me,* so my spirit, *my invisible presence and gracious assistance,* remaineth among you: fear ye not. 6 For thus saith the LORD of hosts, *(a solemn introduction of a celebrated prophecy of the Messiah,)* Yet once, it [is] a little while, and I will shake the heavens and the earth, and the sea, and the dry [land;] *there shall be one other violent commotion in the world, and, comparatively in a little while; not only shall the Persians be overcome by the Grecians, and they by the Romans, and Judea subdued and desolated, but one great and final religious revolution;* 7 And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come; *that is, Christ, who is worthy to be desired by all; and who shall make such discoveries of God and his mercy, as are the noble objects of rational, ardent, and universal desire†;* and I will fill this house with glory *by the presence of the Messiah,* saith the LORD of hosts; *or, this shall be the filling of its glory,*

\* It was sixty-eight years since the destruction of the temple, so that those who were seventy-five and upwards could well remember it, as Ezra and some others did.

† The Jews did expect him, and many heathens wished for such a person.

that which shall make it complete; a promise designed to encourage the people in their work. 8 The silver [is] mine, and the gold [is] mine, saith the LORD of hosts; *I could give this temple all ornaments of gold and silver, if I pleased; but I intend a better glory for it.* 9 The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the LORD of hosts; *though this second temple will not be so grand and splendid as the first, though it shall want the ark, the Shekinah, the oracle, &c., yet it shall have a greater glory, because it shall be honoured with Christ's presence, and the gospel be preached there: and in this place will I give peace, all kind of happiness, saith the LORD of hosts; referring to the spiritual blessings offered by Christ.—Thus it appears that Christ was to come while this temple stood, and therefore Jesus of Nazareth must be the true Messiah.*

10 In the four and twentieth [day] of the ninth [month,] in the second year of Darius, came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet, saying, 11 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Ask now the priests [concerning] the law, saying, 12 If one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and with his skirt do touch bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any meat, shall it be holy? And the priests answered and said, No; *though the garment that toucheth the sin offering is holy, it cannot communicate holiness to any thing else.* 13 Then said Haggai, If [one that is] unclean by a dead body touch any of these, shall it be unclean? And the priests answered and said, It shall be unclean. 14 Then answered Haggai, and said, So [is] this people, and so [is] this nation before me, saith the LORD; and so [is] every work of their hands; and that which they offer there [is] unclean; *while their hearts are unclean, and their lives irregular, their sacrifices cannot be acceptable; their offerings at the altar are in vain, while they neglect the work I command them to do.* 15 And now, I pray you, consider from this day and upward, from before a stone was laid upon a stone in the temple of the LORD; *from the time that a stop was put to the building:* 16 Since those [days] were, when [one] came to an heap of twenty [measures,] there were [but] ten: when [one] came to the press-fat for to draw out fifty [vessels] out of the press, there were [but] twenty; *the harvest and vintage produced at most but half of what you expected.* 17 I smote you with blasting and with mildew and with hail in all the labours of your hands; yet ye [turned] not to me, saith the LORD. 18 Consider now from this day and upward, from the four and twentieth day of the ninth [month, even] from the day that the foundation of the LORD's

temple was laid, consider [it.] 19 Is the seed yet in the barn? yea, as yet the vine, and the fig tree, and the pomegranate, and the olive tree hath not brought forth: from this day will I bless [you;] *it is now November, and so far from harvest, that you cannot guess whether the next year shall be fruitful or not; yet I assure you it shall be a plentiful year: from the day you began the work again I will prosper you.*

20 And again the word of the LORD came unto Haggai in the four and twentieth [day] of the month, saying, 21 Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I will shake the heavens and the earth; 22 And I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen; and I will overthrow the chariots, and those that ride in them; and the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother. 23 In that day, saith the LORD of hosts, will I take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant, the son of Shealtiel, saith the LORD, and will make thee as a signet; *set thee in a place of greatest safety, and keep thee secure: for I have chosen thee, saith the LORD of hosts; a promise of future and final favour to Zerubbabel in particular.*

## REFLECTIONS.

1. A SENSE of God's presence, should engage us to go on resolutely in his work. God promised to be with the Jews while building his temple; so they began. He then, for their encouragement, repeated the promise; and that induced them to persevere, notwithstanding their difficulties and dangers. Let us attend to this in our christian work. It is great, difficult, and important; we have much opposition from without and within; we have need to be strong, to exert ourselves with vigour; and we have the promise of his presence to animate us; *his spirit remaineth* with us. Let us depend on its aid. Though the state of things now is perhaps worse than in the days of our fathers, yet that should not discourage us; but excite us to be more active in our endeavours, and more earnest in our prayers.

2. Let us rejoice in the accomplishment of this glorious prophecy; and earnestly seek the presence of Christ with his churches. The second temple is now destroyed, and therefore the Messiah is certainly come. He hath come to the nations in general, and come to us in particular; and he is a Saviour every

way desirable; admirably suited to our circumstances. Let us rejoice in him as *our peace*; and regard his presence and blessing as the chief glory of our places of worship: not silver and gold, splendour and decorations, but the pure gospel and grace of Christ; his Spirit attending his ordinances. Let us earnestly pray that this may be the glory of the houses where we assemble, and that all our souls may be enriched and adorned thereby.

3. Let us be very solicitous not to pollute our offerings by any irregularities. A holy garment would not sanctify other things; but he that was defiled, defiled every thing he touched. An instructive law, intimating that pollution is more easily communicated than holiness. A relation to God's people will not make us holy. Attendance upon ordinances will not save, nor be acceptable, while the hands and heart are polluted. Let us labour then to cleanse our hands and hearts from wickedness, that our worship may be pleasing to God.

4. Let us carefully observe the correspondence which subsists between the providence and the word of God; *v.* 19. While we neglect our duty, we can expect nothing but blasting providences; but when we return to our duty, we have encouragement to expect God's blessing. Let us attend likewise to the correspondence there is between our prayers and the providence of God. There is a greater agreement between them than is generally observed: and though we are not in this respect under such an equal providence as the Jews were; yet this we shall certainly find, that *godliness is profitable to all things, having the promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come.*

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THE BOOK OF  
THE PROPHET ZECHARIAH.

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INTRODUCTION.

ZECHARIAH was contemporary with Haggai; and, like his, the first part of this prophecy is designed to encourage the people to build the temple: in the latter part he treats of the sufferings, death, and kingdom of Christ, in many particulars, not mentioned by any of the lesser prophets before him; every thing relating to those great events becoming more explicit, in proportion as their accomplishment drew nearer.

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CHAPTER I.

This chapter contains an exhortation to repentance, and promises of security and peace while they were building the temple.

1 **I**N the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the LORD unto Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet, saying, 2 The LORD hath been sore displeased with your fathers. 3 Therefore say thou unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Turn ye unto me, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the LORD of hosts. *The words are repeated, to remind them how dangerous it was to oppose him, and that his almighty power and majesty ought to dispose them to return to him.* 4 Be ye not as your fathers, unto whom the former prophets, especially Jeremiah, have cried, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Turn ye now from your evil ways, and [from] your evil doings: but they did not hear, nor hearken unto me, saith the LORD. 5 Your fathers, where [are] they? and the prophets, do they live for ever? *those who prophesied, and the people against whom they prophesied, are all dead; but the testimony of facts to the truth of my predictions remains.* 6 But my words and my statutes, which I commanded my servants the prophets, did they not take hold of your fathers?



*my words took effect in their punishment, and showed the prophets to be true? and they returned, they repented when it was too late, and said, Like as the LORD of hosts thought to do unto us, according to our ways, and according to our doings, so hath he dealt with us; and thus my threatenings denounced by my prophets at this time, will seize you, except ye take warning.*

7 Upon the four and twentieth day of the eleventh month, which [is] the month Sebat, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the LORD unto Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet, saying, 8 I saw by night, and behold a man, riding upon a red horse, and he stood among the myrtle trees that [were] in the bottom; and behind him [were there] red horses, speckled, and white\*. 9 Then said I, O my lord, what [are] these? And the angel that talked with me said unto me, I will show thee what these [be.] 10 And the man that stood among the myrtle trees, *the angel who presided over the rest, took as it were the words out of his mouth, and answered and said, These [are they] whom the LORD hath sent to walk to and fro through the earth; to manage the affairs of the nations.* 11 And they answered the angel of the LORD that stood among the myrtle trees, and said, We have walked to and fro through the earth, and, behold, all the earth sitteth still, and is at rest; *the Persian empire is now in a quiet state, therefore it is a proper time to build the temple.*

12 Then the angel of the LORD, *the captain of the Lord's hosts, the guardian of Jerusalem,* answered and said, O LORD of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten years? *it being now near seventy years since the city was taken.* 13 And the LORD answered the angel that talked with me [with] good words [and] comfortable words. 14 So the angel that communed with me said unto me, Cry thou, *deliver this message to the people,* saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy; *I am zealous for them with great zeal.* 15 And I am very sore displeased with the heathen [that are] at ease; *and my judgment shall come upon them: for I was but a little displeased with Judah,*

\* The prophet saw a vision of angels; and of the Lord of them, (that is, of Christ, the captain of the Lord's hosts,) like a warrior, reposing himself under some myrtle trees in the heat of the day. The angels are represented as riding on different horses; the red might represent those who presided over countries that were the seat of war; the white, the guardians of those who were in peace; and the speckled, those who were charged both with judgment and mercy, or that were concerned in more various dispensations.

*that is, only for a short time, and intended to punish them moderately, and they helped forward the affliction; they gratified their ambition and cruelty, and did all they could to sink and destroy my people.* 16 Therefore thus saith the LORD; I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies: my house shall be built in it, saith the LORD of hosts, and a line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem; *the streets and walls shall be regularly built.* 17 Cry yet, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; my cities through prosperity shall yet be spread abroad; *not only Jerusalem, but other cities in Judea shall be inhabited by multitudes, and spread abroad their suburbs and colonies;* and the LORD shall yet comfort Zion, and shall yet choose Jerusalem; *shall delight in the Jews as his chosen people.*

18 Then lifted I up mine eyes, and saw, and behold four horns. 19 And I said unto the angel that talked with me, What [be] these? And he answered me, These [are] the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel and Jerusalem; *that is, the neighbouring nations who hindered the building of the temple; the Samaritans, Arabians, Ammonites, and Philistines, as we read in Nehemiah. Horns were usual emblems of power, as the offensive power of many beasts lies in their horns.* 20 And the LORD showed me four carpenters. 21 Then said I, What come these to do? And he spake, saying, These [are] the horns which have scattered Judah, so that no man did lift up his head: but these are come to fray or affright them, to cast out the horns of the Gentiles, which lifted up their horn over the land of Judah to scatter it; *these are an equal number of instruments which I have provided to destroy their power.*

## REFLECTIONS.

1. WE are here most clearly taught that God takes notice of and remembers the messages which he hath sent to his people; an instructive thought, *v. 4.*, what messengers have been sent, their different gifts, the messages they have delivered, the pains they have taken, and the warnings they have given. The general command of all his messengers is the same; namely, *turn to God, and repent.* He is the Lord of hosts; therefore, not to turn to him will involve us in dreadful destruction.

2. Let us reflect on the death of preceding ministers and former generations. Our fathers, and the ministers who preached to them, are gone, and where are they? Faithful ministers are

rewarded, and those who obeyed their messages are saved ; but on those who did not, the word hath taken hold, and the threatenings of it are executed upon them. Ministers die ; but the word of God does not die with them. Its efficacy is the same, through all generations. *This word is by the gospel preached to us, and will judge us in the great day.*

3. We should rejoice in Christ's superiority to angels, and his guardianship of kingdoms and churches. Let us consider him as *the captain of the Lord's hosts, and the captain of our salvation.* Angels are subject to him, and are employed by him, either as instruments of vengeance, or of mercy ; and they cheerfully and fully execute his commands. He still intercedes for the church : he both defends it against its enemies, and employs his interest in heaven for its security and peace : and God heareth him always, answers him with good and comfortable words ; for *in him the Father is ever well pleased.*

4. Whatever opposition may be made to the church, God can easily defeat it. There are many confederate against it, many horned beasts, powerful and formidable enemies, are pushing at it ; but he is still zealous for its support. Be the horns ever so many or strong, he can raise up a sufficient number of instruments to oppose and defeat them. Let us, after the example of Christ, be earnest intercessors for the church in its lowest state ; and encourage ourselves with all those comfortable words which God has spoken concerning it ; and thus stir up ourselves to promote its interest. It is the cause of God, and *the gates of hell shall never prevail against it.*

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## CHAPTER II.

Contains further encouragement to the people to go on building the temple and the city.

1 **I** LIFTED up mine eyes again, and looked, and behold a man with a measuring line in his hand. 2 Then said I, Whither goest thou ? And he said unto me, To measure Jerusalem, to see what [is] the breadth thereof, and what is the length thereof ; *that it may be rebuilt as before.* 3 And, behold, the angel that talked with me went forth, and another angel went out to meet him, 4 And said unto him, Run, speak to this young man, saying,

Jerusalem shall be inhabited [as] towns<sup>s</sup> without walls for the multitude of men and cattle therein; *the limits of the old city, though so great, shall not be able to contain the number of the people that shall be desirous to dwell there; but it shall be inhabited like uncalled towns, that is, the suburbs shall extend far beyond the limits of the walls, so as to become greater than the city itself, (as is now the case with many populous cities in our own country.)* 5 For I, saith the LORD, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, as travellers, or shepherds, made fires round about them at night to keep off beasts of prey (a beautiful allusion;) as Jerusalem was yet without walls, God promises to be its defence, and will be the glory in the midst of her; though the Shekinah is gone, my gracious presence shall be an equal honour and benefit.

6 Ho, ho, [come forth,] and flee from the land of the north, from Babylon, saith the LORD: for I have spread you abroad as the four winds of the heaven, saith the LORD, *and am willing you should be gathered together again.* 7 Deliver thyself, O Zion, that dwellest [with] the daughter of Babylon; *make use of the liberty you enjoy, and return to your own country, that you may enjoy Jerusalem's mercies, and escape Babylon's calamities.* 8 For thus saith the LORD of hosts; After the glory which has been foretold, that is, the restoration of Jerusalem and the temple, hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you, to denounce judgments against your chief spoilers, the Chaldeans; for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye, or, mine eye; it affects me in the tenderest part. 9 For, behold, I will shake mine hand upon them, and they shall be a spoil to their servants; *the Persians, who once were subjects and servants to the Babylonians, shall subdue and plunder them:* and ye shall know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me\*.

10 Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for, lo, I come, and

\* This refers to a remarkable event mentioned by heathen historians. In the reign of Darius, in his fifth year, (three years after this time,) Babylon, which had been taken by Cyrus, and was become subject to the Persian monarchs, revolted. The Babylonians had in a stock of provisions for several years, declared war against the king of Persia while he had a viceroy among them, and trusted to the strength of their walls. To cut off all unnecessary mouths, they destroyed most of their wives and children and all that could not bear arms; but a courtier of Darius's got into the city by a stratagem, and let his army in. Upon this, three thousand of the principal citizens were put to death, and the walls in a great measure destroyed. God gave the Jews who stand there a solemn call by this prophet to come out; and hereby their lives were preserved, and they prevented from the necessity of bearing arms against Darius, who had been so kind to them; and which might have been of bad consequence to Jerusalem. So great was the goodness of God in sending them this call. Thus Christ commanded his disciples to flee from Jerusalem before the Romans attacked and destroyed it.—HEROD. iii. sect. 220. JUSTIN. i. 11.

I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the LORD. 11 And many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day, and shall be my people; *many shall become proselytes to the Jewish religion:* and I will dwell in the midst of thee, and thou shalt know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto thee. 12 And the LORD shall inherit Judah his portion in the holy land, and shall choose Jerusalem again; *he shall give visible tokens, that they are still his peculiar and favoured people.* 13 Be silent, O all flesh, before the LORD: for he is raised up out of his holy habitation; *a reference to the respectful silence usual in a public assembly, when the king rises from his throne to make a speech to them: so when God gives signs of his appearance, to execute judgment or mercy, the most profound reverence and submission is highly becoming.*

## REFLECTIONS.

1. WE learn hence, what is the most important blessing that we can implore for our country, viz., that *God will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and the glory in the midst of her*, ver. 5., that is, a sure impregnable defence. Our walls of water, and wooden castles, are nothing without this. The continuance of our liberty, and of gospel ordinances, in their purity, is our greatest glory: and it should be our earnest prayer that this glory may continue, and that *upon all this glory God would create a defence.*

2. Let us observe and adore God's condescension and kindness to his people; *v. 8., he that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of mine eye;* the tenderest part of the most sensible organ in the human frame. How kindly does he speak of them! how graciously interest himself in their concerns! And how should this raise our esteem of God's people; and lead us to forsake Babylon, that is, all the tents of wickedness, and join ourselves to them. Let us be careful never to injure or reproach God's people; for this is, in effect, hurting the Lord, and making war against heaven: and let us earnestly pray, that God would keep us individually *as the apple of his eye.*

3. The presence of God with his people is the firmest ground for joy and praise. If he dwells in our land, we shall be secure and happy: if he dwells in our churches and our houses, we have the best security, and the truest glory: if he dwells in our hearts by his Spirit, we have a solid foundation of joy, and ought to

abound in his praise. Let us earnestly seek and highly value his presence, and be careful never to do any thing to forfeit it.

4. Let us respectfully wait for all the manifestations of God's presence and power; τ. 13. There have been, and still are, many remarkable displays of it, which ought to be adored. Let us believe his promises, wait their accomplishment, and leave it to him to work in his own time and way, and by his own instruments; neither prescribing to him, nor objecting against his methods of proceeding; but, with the greatest submission, adoring them: *for he is greatly to be feared in the assembly of his saints, and to be had in reverence of all that draw nigh unto him.*

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### CHAPTER III.

This chapter contains further encouragement to the Jews, notwithstanding some defects and irregularities found among them.

1 **AND** he, *that is, the angel that talked with me*, showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him: *an allusion to the custom of witnesses standing at the right hand of the prisoner: thus Satan is represented as pleading the sins of the priests and people, as a reason why they should be still under the power of their adversaries.* 2 **And** the LORD, *that is, Christ, (as most understand it,) or, the angel of the Lord, (as the Syriac reads it, compare Jude 9.,)* said unto Satan, the LORD will rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem for his special residence, will rebuke thee: [is] not this a brand plucked out of the fire? *a small remnant, remarkably preserved? therefore God will excuse their infirmities, and spare them.* 3 **Now** Joshua was clothed with filthy garments; *the old, mean, polluted garments of a captive, to represent the many sins of the people, especially in taking strange wives, of which Joshua's own sons had been guilty:* and he stood before the angel. 4 **And** he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, *to the angels in his retinue,* saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. **And** unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment, *in token of pardoning mercy, and of restoration to prosperity and honour. The vision imports, that the*

*priestly office was to be resumed and exercised with decency and splendour.* 5 And I, the prophet, being desirous of the purity and prosperity of the people, or rather, the angel of the Lord, said, Let them set a fair mitre upon his head, in token of God's reconciliation to the priests, and of his confirming Joshua and his family in their office. So they set a fair mitre upon his head, and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the LORD stood by, to approve and encourage what was done.

6 And the angel of the LORD protested, solemnly and earnestly affirmed, unto Joshua, saying, 7 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; If thou wilt walk in my ways, and if thou wilt keep my charge, then thou shalt also judge my house, and shalt also keep my courts, and I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by\*; a title to, and in due time possession of, the heavenly mansions among the blessed angels. Heb. xii. 22.

8 Hear now, O Joshua, the high priest, thou and thy fellows that sit before thee; not merely the priests, but all thy assistants in council and government, Zerubbabel and others: for they [are] men wondered at; or, typical men, whom I will make use of to typify my church under the Messiah: for, behold, I will bring forth my servant, the BRANCH; that is, the Messiah, who shall spring from the root of Jesse, and bring forth excellent fruit for my glory, and the happiness of the world. 9 For behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua, a corner stone, (which the prophet saw in vision), such as it was usual to carve heads or flowers upon; upon one stone [shall be] seven eyes; to denote the extraordinary wisdom of the Messiah, who should have the Spirit without measure: behold, I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the LORD of hosts; I will qualify him for his work, and make him appear honourable in his office; and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day; I will do that in one day, by the atonement of Christ, which all the sacrifices of the law could never do. 10 In that day, saith the LORD of hosts, shall ye call every man his neighbour under the vine and under the fig tree; peaceful times shall be established, and friendship and love eminently prevail.

## REFLECTIONS.

1. LET us often reflect on the delightful view here given us of the intercession of Christ. Satan is still the accuser of the brethren;

\* See Mr. ORTON'S *Practical Discourses*, Vol. I. Disc. xviii.

he stands as it were before God, to oppose all good designs and zealous men. But Christ interposes for his church and people; stops the mouth of this accuser; pleads God's free choice of them, and the great mercy he has shown to them; *they are a brand plucked out of the burning*: it is no wonder therefore that there are many imperfections among them. Happy is it for us to have such a friend and advocate in heaven. *In his name we may come boldly to the throne of grace, to seek mercy and grace to help in time of need; seeing that Jesus Christ the Son of God is passed into the heavens for us.*

2. See what a happy change divine grace makes in the state of men. This is beautifully represented in the case of Joshua; his filthy garments were taken away; change of apparel was given, not only for cleanliness, but for splendour. Thus sanctifying grace works upon the mind: thus are we to *put off the old man, to put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and to keep our garments unspotted.* But much more perfectly shall this change take place in the future world. Pollutions here will cleave to us; but, hereafter, we shall put on clean linen, pure and white, *the righteousness of the saints*; such as is fit to adorn the favourites of God. This should encourage us amidst our present imperfections, and engage us to long for the day of final redemption and triumph.

3. Let us own with pleasure and thankfulness, the accomplishment of the prophecy in the latter part of this chapter. The branch hath sprung up, spread wide, and borne excellent fruit. We have a precious corner-stone, firm and immoveable. In Christ are lodged treasures of wisdom and knowledge; God hath furnished and qualified him for his work. He hath made a complete atonement for sin; and his servants enjoy that peace which is the consequence of faith in his gospel, even peace of conscience, and mutual good-will and love, as far as it prevails. This stone God had laid and engraved. Though the builders refused it, yet *it is become the head-stone of the corner. This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.*

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## CHAPTER IV.

Contains further encouragement to the Jews, especially to their leaders, that their temple should be finished, and their affairs be prosperous.

1 **AND** the angel that talked with me came again, and waked me, as a man that is wakened out of his sleep, *though not actually asleep, but in a pleasing reverie, musing on what had been discovered to me,* 2 And said unto me, What seest thou? And I said, I have looked, and behold a candlestick all [of] gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and his seven lamps thereon, and seven pipes to the seven lamps, which [are] upon the top thereof: 3 And two olive trees by it, one upon the right [side] of the bowl, and the other upon the left [side] thereof\*. 4 So I answered and spake to the angel that talked with me, saying, What [are] these, my lord? 5 Then the angel that talked with me answered and said unto me, Knowest thou not what these be? 6 And I said, No, my lord. Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This [is] the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts; *as the lamps are supplied with oil in a secret, invisible manner, so the temple shall be finished and the nation established, not by human power and force, but by the secret operation of God's spirit upon the hearts of the kings of Persia, and of the Jewish people.* 7 Who [art] thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel [thou shalt become] a plain; *all obstacles shall be removed out of his way; and he shall bring forth the head stone thereof with shoutings, shall finish the building of the temple; that is, there shall be great rejoicing at it, as there was when the foundation was first laid, (Ezra iii. 11.), [crying,] Grace, grace unto it; both acknowledging and imploring the divine favour.* 8 Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, *I was commissioned to go and speak these things,* saying, 9 The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it; and thou shalt

\* This refers to the temple service, and the whole Jewish polity, which depended upon it: he saw a candlestick with seven lamps; and provision made for supplying them with oil in an extraordinary manner, viz., by two olive trees, which gently distilled a fine oil, which, being received into two golden pipes, was conveyed into a large bowl on the top of the candlestick, from whence it was conducted by seven small pipes to each of the seven lamps.

know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto you *to foretell this*. 10 For who hath despised the day of small things? for they shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel; *or rather, whosoever hath despised the small beginnings, shall rejoice when they see Zerubbabel vigorously setting about the work and carrying it on successfully*; [with] those seven; they [are,] *or rather, for those seven lamps represent, the eyes of the LORD, which run to and fro through the whole earth; he shall be prospered by the operations of that wise and powerful Providence, to which the ministry of angels is subservient.*

11 Then answered I, and said unto him, What [are] these two olive trees upon the right [side] of the candlestick and upon the left [side] thereof? 12 And I answered again, *I asked the second time, and said unto him, What [be these] two particular olive branches, which through the two golden pipes empty the golden [oil] out of themselves, or, empty out of themselves oil into the gold?* 13 And he answered me and said, Knowest thou not what these [be?] And I said, No, my lord. 14 Then said he, These [are] the two anointed ones, *Joshua the high priest, and Zerubbabel the governor; for both the princes and priests were anointed; and this intimates, that some extraordinary communication of the Spirit should be given to both; that stand by the LORD of the whole earth; are continually attending upon God, to receive direction and assistance from him in their work: the whole is designed to assure them that they should finish the temple and support the interests of religion.*

## REFLECTIONS.

1. WE should be led from hence to adore the good providence of God for the care which he takes of his church. He hath established a church in the world, and the golden candlesticks and lamps represent its excellency, and the dignity of its ministers. Both are designed to enlighten a dark world, by diffusing the knowledge of divine things. God hath instituted religious ordinances with this view, and made provision for the supply of the lamps, by raising up a succession of faithful ministers. All their authority and gifts are from him. Great are our privileges in this respect; and it becomes us to praise God for them, and carefully to improve them.

2. Let us hence learn to hope for a more flourishing state of

religion. Let us be careful not to yield to discouragements; for God can make the mountain become a plain. Human means will not do of themselves. To procure oil in the ordinary way, the olives must be beaten and strongly pressed; but here it gently distils of itself: and it is thus that the work of God is still carried on, silently, and without human force and power. Let us therefore not *despise the day of small things*, nor be alarmed when there is much opposition, and only weak instruments of defence and slender helps: God may produce wonderful and glorious effects thereby. Many censures are thrown upon God's work and workmen for want of considering this. Let us therefore do what we can, without being discouraged by difficulties. Let us be thankful for every increase of piety, every hopeful appearance; rejoice that God will still secure and establish his church: and long for that happy day, when *the head stone shall be brought forth with shouting, crying, Grace, grace, unto it.*

3. Let us earnestly pray that our magistrates and ministers may be like those described by the prophet. These olive trees represent the great offices and ordinances of the magistracy and ministry; and it is happy when both are anointed with divine grace, and concur to support the cause of God in the world. Oh that all our magistrates and ministers were thus anointed! Then would our country flourish, and the happy effects would be seen through every part of it. Let us daily pray that God would, by his Spirit, furnish both with such gifts and dispositions of heart, that they may maintain the honour of his name, and in every respect act, as those who *stand before the Lord of the whole earth.*

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## CHAPTER V.

Notwithstanding the promises to the Jews in the former chapters, they are here reproved for their wickedness, and reminded that, if they forsook God and religion, some more dreadful calamity would come upon them than they had yet felt.

1 **T**HEN I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a flying roll; *a long roll of parchment, which is represented as flying, to denote the suddenness of God's judgments.* 2 And he said unto me, What seest thou? And I answered, I see a flying

roll ; the length thereof [is] twenty cubits, and the breadth thereof ten cubits ; *that is, about ten yards long and five broad ; represented thus large, to show what a number of curses should come upon the wicked.* 3 Then said he unto me, This [is] the curse that goeth forth over the face of the whole earth, or land : for every one that stealeth shall be cut off [as] on this side according to it ; and every one that sweareth, shall be cut off [as] on that side according to it\*. 4 I will bring it forth, saith the LORD of hosts, and it shall enter into the house of the thief, and into the house of him that sweareth falsely by my name : and it shall remain in the midst of his house, and shall consume it with the timber thereof and the stones thereof ; *by a secret curse I will blast those who thrive by injustice, and reduce them to desolation and ruin.*

5 Then the angel that talked with me went forth, or rather, *went on, proceeded in his discourse,* and he said unto me, Lift up now thine eyes, and see what [is] this that goeth forth. 6 And I said, What [is] it ? And he said, this [is] an ephah that goeth forth ; *a large tub in the shape of an ephah, or bushel.* He said moreover, This [is] their resemblance through all the earth ; *intimating, that the measure of their iniquity was filling.* 7 And, behold, there was lifted up a talent of lead ; *a large leaden weight, which was a cover to the ephah :* and this [is] a woman that sitteth in the midst of the ephah ; *and who represents the Jewish people.* 8 And he said, This [is] wickedness. And he cast it into the midst of the ephah ; and he cast the weight of lead upon the mouth thereof ; *that is, the cover was let fall, and fixed down, to intimate the insupportable weight of God's judgments, and that there is no escaping them.* 9 Then lifted I up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold, there came out two women, and the wind [was] in their wings ; for they had wings like the wings of a stork ; and they lifted up the ephah between the earth and the heaven ; *they had two large wings stretched out, and a strong wind bore them along.* 10 Then said I to the angel that talked with me, Whither do these bear the ephah ? 11 And he said unto me, To build it an house in the land of Shinar ; *supposed to signify Babylon :* and it shall be established, and set there upon her own base ; *the general meaning is, that God would remove this wicked people (represented by the woman) into a distant land, (it may signify any place*

\* Stealing may particularly refer to their defrauding the priests of their dues : Malachi charges them with this. When suspected of theft they were to clear themselves by a solemn oath ; so that they were frequently tempted to forswear themselves.

*of captivity, as Egypt is used for slavery in general,) if they went on in their wickedness after having been so graciously restored; that he would send instruments of his vengeance, who should take them from their own land and carry them captive, and that their punishment should be of long continuance; and this is accomplished in the present dispersed and afflicted state of the Jews, in which they have continued already more than one thousand seven hundred years.*

### REFLECTIONS.

1. WE have reason to lament the prevalency of stealing and swearing, the sins here mentioned, among us. There are innumerable methods of fraud and deceit, daily practised, which are hardly reckoned criminal, because they are customary. But we here see in what light God considers these vices: though they are not discovered, or not punished by men, yet *he will visit for these things*; perhaps he will destroy the houses which have been built by such means; at least he will certainly destroy the souls of thieves and profane swearers, if they do not repent: *They shall not inherit the kingdom of God*. If we desire that our houses should be established, let us *put away iniquity far from them*; for *the curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked, but he will establish the habitation of the just*.

2. See how God is especially displeased with the sins of a highly-favoured nation. They are filling up the measure of their guilt; and when it is full, the righteousness of God, as the governor of the world, requires that he should punish them. By righteousness alone is a nation established; and public virtue will be the best security of public happiness. An important thought, which we Britons ought to reflect upon. Though we are delivered from many evils, as the Jews were from captivity, and are settled in a state of peace; yet, if we continue in sin as a people, God's judgments will come upon us, swiftly and irresistibly. May we never forget this truth, which God's prophets and dispensations join to inculcate, that *righteousness exalteth a nation, but that sin is a reproach to, and tends to the ruin of, any person*.

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## CHAPTER VI.

In which is related the vision of the four chariots; and by the crowns of Joshua, is showed the temple and kingdom of Christ the branch\*.

1 **AND I** turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold, there came four chariots out from between two mountains; and the mountains [were] mountains of brass; *referring perhaps to the immutability of the divine counsels, which are firm as mountains of brass; or rather, as mountains are often the boundaries of empires, their successive progress is represented by these chariots coming out from between the mountains.* 2 In the first chariot [were] red horses; *to represent the Babylonians, who were cruel to the Jews, and their bloody wars against the neighbouring nations;* and in the second chariot black horses; *to represent the Persian empire, and that the Jews were in an afflicted state under them, discouraged and tributary;* 3 And in the third chariot white horses; *to represent the Grecian empire, and the favour which Alexander showed to the Jews; (conquerors, in their triumphal processions, often rode on white horses;)* and in the fourth chariot grised and bay horses; *to represent the Roman empire, the different forms of government in it, and the remarkable successions and events through which it passed.* 4 Then I answered and said unto the angel that talked with me, 5 What [are] these, my lord? And the angel answered and said unto me, These [are] the four spirits of the heavens, which go forth from standing before the LORD of all the earth; *that is, the four angels which preside over these monarchies, and receive commission and direction from God.* 6 The black horses which [are] therein go forth into the north country; and the white go forth after them; and the grised go forth toward the south country; *the Persians shall invade and conquer the Babylonians; the Grecians shall conquer and succeed the Persians; and the Romans shall conquer Carthage and Egypt, and so establish their grandeur and extend their empire.* 7 And the bay went forth, and sought to go that they might walk to and fro through the earth: and he said,

\* Commentators are divided about the first vision. Many suppose it to be a general representation of the ministry of angels: others, of the four great empires of the world; perhaps the latter is the true sense, and angels are represented as presiding over these empires.

Get you hence, walk to and fro through the earth. So they walked to and fro through the earth; *referring probably to the latter end of the Roman empire under the Goths and Vandals, and the ten kingdoms erected by them, (see Rev. xiii. 1. xvii. 3.)*

8 Then cried he upon me, and spake unto me, saying, Behold, these that go toward the north country have quieted my spirit in the north country; *that is, the Persians have avenged my quarrel, and executed my righteous vengeance on the Chaldeans.*

9 And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 10 Take of [them of] the captivity, [even] of Heldai, of Tobijah, and of Jedaiah, which are come from Babylon, and come thou the same day, and go into the house of Josiah the son of Zephaniah\*; 11 Then take silver and gold *which they have brought with them to offer to the Lord*, and make two crowns, and set [them] upon the head of Joshua, the son of Josedech, the high priest, *who was to be a type of the Messiah*; 12 And speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Behold, the man whose name [is] The BRANCH; *behold a plain representation of the Messiah*; and he shall grow up out of his place, *or, branch up from under him, shall be his successor in the priesthood*, and he shall build the temple of the LORD: 13 Even he shall build the temple of the LORD; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: *Christ shall unite in his sacred person the priestly and the royal offices*: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both; *between both offices. Therefore a crown was sent to the high priest, and not to Zerubbabel or any one of the house of David, lest they should think that he was the Messiah. These offices sometimes clashed, and differences arose between kings and priests; but they were united in Christ, and the exercise of both these offices by him shall sweetly concur to produce peace and reconciliation with God, as priest; deliverance from all our spiritual enemies, as king; and to make peace between Jews and Gentiles, Eph. ii. 13., &c.* 14 And the crowns shall be to Helem, and to Tobijah, and to Jedaiah, and to Hen the son of Zephaniah, for a memorial in the temple of the LORD; *these persons are to take the crowns and lay them up in the temple, as memorials of this, and to keep up the expectation of the Messiah*†.

\* This refers to the messengers who came from the captives that remained in Babylon, bringing presents to the temple. The prophet is ordered to meet them in the house of Josiah, who probably kept the treasures of the temple.

† There were probably several crowns; two gold ones for Joshua, and some of silver for his companions. A beautiful type of Christ's making his servants kings and priests unto God, surrounding the throne on which he sits.

15 And they [that are] far off shall come and build in the temple of the LORD; *many Jews in Babylon, and others in remote countries, shall come and help forward the building of the material temple, as pledges of the Gentiles joining themselves to the church of Christ, and helping to build up the spiritual temple;* and ye shall know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto you. And [this] shall come to pass, if ye will diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God; *and you shall be the first to partake of the benefits and blessings of the Messiah's kingdom.*

### REFLECTIONS.

1. LET us learn hence to reverence God, as the Lord of all the armies in heaven and earth. Whether the monarchies of the earth, or the angels that have the administration of calamitous or prosperous affairs, or of mixed dispensations among men, they are all under the direction of the Almighty; all are executed *according to the counsel of his will.* His providence superintends the concerns of nations, and the issues of war; and his angels execute his purposes: an important and comfortable thought. Amidst all the confusions around us, let us impress this upon our hearts, that *the Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens, and that his kingdom ruleth over all.*

2. Let us acknowledge the divine goodness, in raising up Christ *as a priest on his throne:* a noble and delightful view of the Redeemer's offices! He is a king to rule over the church and world, and to guard the interests of his people; and a priest to atone and intercede for them: and it is pleasing to consider him in both lights. Let us submit to him as a king; and trust in him as a priest, to offer up our humble sacrifices, to build his spiritual temple, and to raise up souls for eternal glory. The collective body of true christians are one temple, with whom Christ dwells, and who honour and glorify him. *He bears the glory,* that is, these glorious offices, *with honour:* he executes them well; and therefore deserves to receive glory and praise from all his subjects.

3. If we desire the blessings of the Redeemer's kingdom, we must diligently obey his voice. His kingdom is established among us though we are Gentiles, *v. 15.,* and we should do all in our power that this kingdom, or christian temple, may be supported and adorned; that we may be living stones in it, and add to its beauty and strength. In order to this, let us diligently *obey the*



voice of the Lord, do his whole will, and leave nothing undone : for Christ is the author of eternal salvation to them only, and to all of them, that obey him.

## CHAPTER VII.

The Jews having sent to inquire concerning the regard they were to show to their set fasts, Zechariah here reproves their hypocrisy in them; and exhorts them by repentance to put away sin, which was the cause of their calamity.

1 **AND** it came to pass in the fourth year of king Darius, [that] the word of the LORD came unto Zechariah in the fourth [day] of the ninth month, [even] in Chisleu; 2 When they had sent unto the house of God Sherezer and Regem-melech, and their men, to pray before the LORD\*, 3 And to speak unto the priests which [were] in the house of the LORD of hosts, and to the prophets, saying, Should I weep in the fifth month, separating myself, as I have done these so many years? *separating myself from common labours and comforts, in remembrance of the temple and city, which were then burnt? as the temple was rebuilt, and its worship restored, they thought this might be dispensed with.*

4 Then came the word of the LORD of hosts unto me, saying, 5 Speak unto all the people of the land, *not to the Jews in Babylon only, but to all in Judea,* and to the priests, saying, When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh [month], *on account of the murder of Gedaliah, whom Nebuchadnezzar had appointed to be ruler of the Jews,* even those seventy years did ye at all fast unto me, [even] to me? *was there not hypocrisy in your feasts? was your design good? was your manner of doing it acceptable? was there any real religion in these things?* 6 And when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did not ye eat [for yourselves,] and drink [for yourselves?] *to satisfy your appetites, and not to glorify me; that is, you lived in a gluttonous and riotous manner, after your fasts were over.* 7 [Should ye] not [hear] the words, *or, are not these the words,* which the LORD hath cried by the former prophets? *did not God send you these messages by his prophets before me, when*

\* These were persons of considerable rank, and fortune, sent as messengers of the Jews who continued in Babylon, to offer prayers and sacrifices on their behalf at Jerusalem.

Jerusalem was inhabited and in prosperity, and the cities thereof round about her, when [men] inhabited the south and the plain? *your neglect of which was your ruin, so that a country once well peopled became desolate.*

8 And the word of the LORD came unto Zechariah, saying,  
9 Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Execute true judgment, and show mercy and compassions every man to his brother:  
10 And oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart; *do not imagine that ceremonial observances will make you prosperous, without integrity and charity.* 11 But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, *like refractory beasts*, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear. 12 Yea, they made their hearts [as] an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law and words which the LORD of hosts hath sent in his spirit by the former prophets: *no arguments impressed them*: therefore, *as might reasonably be expected, there came a great wrath from the LORD of hosts.* 13 Therefore it is come to pass, [that] as he cried, *that is, as I called to them to repent*, and they would not hear; so they cried *to me to deliver*, and I would not hear, saith the LORD of hosts: 14 But I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations whom they knew not. Thus the land was desolate after them, that no man passed through nor returned: for they laid the pleasant land desolate.

## REFLECTIONS.

1. WE are again taught, that the externals of religion are nothing, without a suitable conduct and behaviour. These people were inquisitive about fasts; and more concerned about ceremonies, than moral duties. This is a common error: let us therefore beware of it. In all religious acts, let us be concerned to glorify God, and approve ourselves unto him. Let us *hear the words of his prophets*; and when we come to pray, be willing to hear and learn the will of God. *If we turn away our ear from hearing the law, our fastings and prayers will be an abomination.*

2. See the necessity of making the glory of God the end of our common actions. This is an important part of religion. *Whether therefore, ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God, (1 Cor. x. 31.,)* and this is applicable to all labours and recreations. Great stress is laid upon this here: *Have ye done this*

*to me, even to me?* If all centre in self, in bodily gratification and pleasure, there is no religion even in religious festivals. Whereas, if God is regarded in all, common actions are religious ones: and every meal is an acceptable service, if the prevailing intention be that the body may be thereby fitted to serve the soul in God's work.

3. Let us be careful not to refuse and disobey divine warnings. We see what God required of the Jews by succeeding prophets, *v. 9, 10.* A neglect of his admonitions brought on national judgments. *And these things happened to them for ensamples to us.* Let us then take warning: avoid oppression, and practise the strictest honesty, kindness, and benevolence, as we desire the prosperity of our country, our families, or our souls. These things have been required under every dispensation; and all pretences to religion and communion with God; all hopes of his favour without them, are vain. *What doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?*

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## CHAPTER VIII.

This chapter contains encouragements to obedience by promises of divine favour.

1 **AGAIN** the word of the LORD of hosts came [to me,] saying, 2 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; I was, *or, have been,* jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I was jealous for her with great fury; *and have brought heavy punishments on the Babylonians her oppressors.* 3 Thus saith the LORD; I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth; *sincerity and true religion shall distinguish its inhabitants;* and the mountain of the LORD of hosts the holy mountain; *where idolatry shall be practised no more.* 4 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age; *whereas before, men were cut off in their prime, by sword, pestilence, &c.* 5 And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof; *God will build up the families of its inhabitants, and give them security, health, and plenty.* 6 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; If it be

marvellous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, should it also be marvellous in mine eyes? saith the LORD of hosts. 7 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Behold, I will save my people from the east country, and from the west country; 8 And I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness; *in faithfulness and mercy.*

9 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Let your hands be strong, ye that hear in these days these words by the mouth of the prophets, which [were] in the day that the foundation of the house of the LORD of hosts was laid, that the temple might be built; *those comfortable promises, by which you have lately been encouraged to rebuild my house.* 10 For before these days there was no hire for man, nor any hire for beast; *there was not produce enough to pay the wages of men and beasts;* neither [was there any] peace to him that went out or came in because of the affliction, *of molestation by neighbours:* for I set all men every one against his neighbour. 11 But now I [will] not [be] unto the residue of this people as in the former days, saith the LORD of hosts. 12 For the seed *time* [shall be] prosperous; the vine shall give her fruit, and the ground shall give her increase, and the heavens shall give their dew; *I will take away the former curse;* and I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these [things.] 13 And it shall come to pass, [that] as ye were a curse among the heathen, *a monument of divine vengeance,* O house of Judah, and house of Israel; so will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing; *partakers of my blessing,* (Hag. ii. 19.), *accounted a people that God hath blessed with extraordinary favours:* fear not, [but] let your hands be strong. 14 For thus saith the LORD of hosts; As I thought, *that is, resolved,* to punish you, when your fathers provoked me to wrath, saith the LORD of hosts, and I repented not, *but did punish them;* 15 So again have I thought in these days to do well unto Jerusalem and to the house of Judah: fear ye not; *I will be as good as my word, if you expect and seek my presence and blessing.*

16 These [are] the things ye shall do; Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates: 17 And let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbour; and love no false oath; *neither practise falsehood, nor countenance it in others:* for all these [are things] that I hate, saith the LORD.

18 And the word of the LORD of hosts came unto me, saying,

Thus saith the LORD of hosts ; 19 The fast of the fourth [month,] *when Jerusalem was taken*, and the fast of the fifth, *when the temple was burnt*, and the fast of the seventh, *when Gedaliah was slain*, and the fast of the tenth, *in which the siege of Jerusalem was begun*, shall be to the house of Judah joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts ; *you shall now lay them aside as days of mourning, and remember them with joy and gladness* ; therefore love the truth and peace ; *be true to God and religion, and live in peace with one another.* 20 Thus saith the LORD of hosts ; [It shall] yet [come to pass,] that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities ; *that is, many Jews going up in companies to Jerusalem* : 21 And the inhabitants of one [city] shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the LORD, and to seek the LORD of hosts : I will go also ; *a spirit of serious piety shall prevail ; they shall exhort one another to religious duties, set a good example, and find many ready to join them.* 22 Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD\*. 23 Thus saith the LORD of hosts ; In those days [it shall come to pass,] that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you : for we have heard [that] God [is] with you ; *many heathens of different nations shall eagerly join with them as proselytes, when God so remarkably favours them.*

## REFLECTIONS.

1. LET us learn not to doubt of the fulfilling of God's promises, though there be a strong probability against it, (v. 6.) He silences all their doubts with this question, *Should it be marvellous in mine eyes?* Therefore, *fear ye not*, is often repeated. God is not only faithful, but he can overcome the greatest difficulties ; *nothing is too hard for him.* And the remembrance of his power and truth should prevent our staggering at his largest promises ; *be ye therefore strong in faith, giving glory to God.*

2. Let us cultivate those dispositions and graces, to which the promises of God are made ; be careful to maintain truth in our dealings, in our conversation, and especially in our religious exercises. *Let us study the things that make for peace ; give up many*

\* As there is nothing said of sacrifices, some suppose this refers to the latter day, perhaps to the proselytes who shall be added to the Jews after their return.

things for it; and *not imagine evil*; for this law extends to the heart. God hates these things; therefore it is ungrateful and dangerous in us to practise them; and if we do, he will show his hatred, by punishing them.

3. It is our duty to invite and encourage others to attend christian ordinances, and *to seek the Lord*. This is an essential part of a good character. Those who have experienced the benefits of religion and its ordinances, will invite others to engage in them; will urge them to do it speedily, and without delay. It is a melancholy proof of the decay of religion, that there is so little zeal to do good, and to admonish one another. Let us therefore stir up ourselves and one another: which will be for their benefit, for our own comfort, and be followed with a great reward.

4. Let us be examples of every good word and work which we recommend to others. *I will go also*. An important hint for ministers and parents not to be *like those who say, and do not*: let us set a good pattern before others, which will be more forcible than any arguments without it. Thus shall we recommend religion; and others will see by our piety, humility, and cheerfulness, that *God is indeed with us*; and so be led, by the concurrence of his grace, to accompany us in the way of holiness and eternal life.

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## CHAPTER IX.

The beginning of this chapter is a prophecy of the expedition of Alexander the Great, about three hundred years before Christ\*.

**1** **T**HE burden of the word of the LORD in the land of Hadrach, concerning the kingdom of Syria, in which Hadrach was a principal city, and Damascus [shall be] the rest thereof; *the anger of the Lord shall fall with peculiar weight on Damascus its capital, and*

\* This and the five remaining chapters of this book, though annexed to the prophecies of Zechariah and bearing the same title, (owing perhaps to their having been first written on the same scroll of parchment,) seem not to be his; the three first do not suit his time, but agree with that of Jeremiah, to whom a citation from them in the New Testament is ascribed, (Matt. xxvii. 9, 10.) The three last chapters form a distinct prophecy, and were written soon after the death of Josiah, (chap. xii. 11.,) and probably before the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians, (chap. xiii. 2—6.,) but by what prophet, if not by Jeremiah, is uncertain. There are two citations from them in the New Testament, (chap. xii. 10. and xiii. 7.) See Bp. Newcome.

*shall rest, or remain, there: when the eyes of man, as of all the tribes of Israel, [shall be] toward the LORD; when the eyes of all Israel shall be directed to the Lord, to seek protection from him\*.*

2 And Hamath also shall border thereby; *or, that borders upon it; Tyrus, and Zidon, though it be very wise; famous for trade, politics, and skill in navigation.*

3 And Tyrus did build herself a strong hold, and heaped up silver as the dust, and fine gold as the mire of the streets.

4 Behold, the LORD will cast her out, and he will smite her power in the sea; and she shall be devoured with fire †.

5 Ashkelon shall see [it,] and fear; Gaza also [shall see it,] and be very sorrowful, and Ekron; for her expectation shall be ashamed; *the neighbouring coasts shall be alarmed for themselves; and the king shall perish from Gaza, and Ashkelon shall not be inhabited ‡.*

6 And a bastard, *one of foreign birth,* shall dwell in Ashdod, and I will cut off the pride of the Philistines §.

7 And I will take away his blood out of his mouth, and his abominations from between his teeth; *will wrest the prey from these fierce beasts, and take away his power to do further mischief: but he that remaineth, even he, [shall be] for our God, and he shall be as a governor in Judah, and Ekron as a Jebusite; several of them shall be converted to the Jewish religion, and incorporated with them, as the Jebusites were permitted to dwell among the Jews ||.*

8 And I will encamp about mine house because of the army, because of him that passeth by, and because of him that returneth; and no oppressor shall pass through them any more; *referring probably to the quietness which Jerusalem enjoyed under Alexander; as if he had said, I will prevent all hostile approaches to the city in which my temple is placed. Or, to God's favouring the Maccabees in their expectations against their enemies: for now have I seen with mine eyes; my eye discerns all future events, and*

\* This better suits Jeremiah's time than Zechariah's; and the conquest of the Syrians by Nebuchadnezzar, than by Alexander. See Jer. xlix. 23. xlvii. 2. and Ezek. xxv. 15.

† Old Tyre was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar; new Tyre was built on an island, and though very strong, was taken and burnt by Alexander.

‡ These places were taken by Alexander, who destroyed Gaza because it held out long against him, and he was wounded there; the inhabitants were treated cruelly, especially the governor, who was dragged alive round the walls till he was destroyed; and the country was left in a desolate condition: hence called *Gaza the desert*. But notwithstanding this, Bp. Newcome thinks, that the prophecy was fulfilled by Nebuchadnezzar. See on Amos i. 8.

§ Jonathan, one of the Maccabees, took it, and destroyed many of the Philistines.

|| Many of the remnant of this people were converted to christianity; there were many christians at Tyre, and many martyrs there.

*I have thus determined. What follows is a famous prophecy to the Messiah.*

9 Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he [is] just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass; *though he is a king as well as a deliverer, yet he does not affect the grandeur of those princes who multiply horses and chariots, but trusts in God's protection. He shall come like the patriarchs and ancient judges, riding upon an ass, yea, upon a foal of an ass, which, though never before backed, shall carry him gently\*.* 10 And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off; *they shall cease from all creature dependance, and repose themselves in the divine protection:* and he shall speak peace unto the heathen; *he shall not destroy the Gentiles, as the Jews foolishly imagined:* and his dominion [shall be] from sea [even] to sea, and from the river [even] to the ends of the earth. 11 As for thee also, O Messiah, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein [is] no water; *by that covenant which the Messiah shall establish with his blood, he shall deliver poor sinners, who, like prisoners in a dungeon, are both confined and starving.*

12 Turn you to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope; *let sinners fly as prisoners of hope to seek refuge in him:* even to day do I declare [that] I will render double unto thee; *I will make them ample amends for their sorrow.—Then begins a new section which contains a prophecy of the Maccabees.* 13 When I have bent Judah for me, filled the bow with Ephraim, *prepared them to be my instruments,* and raised up thy sons, O Zion, against thy sons, O Greece, *given success to their arms against the Syrian kings, the successors of Alexander, (whom the Maccabees often defeated,)* and made thee as the sword of a mighty man. 14 And the LORD shall be seen over them, *in his presiding and directing presence,* and his arrow shall go forth as the lightning: and the Lord GOD shall blow the trumpet, and shall go with whirlwinds of the south; *bring swift and terrible destruction on their enemies.* 15 The LORD of hosts shall defend them; and they shall devour, and subdue with sling stones; *as David did Goliath;* and they shall drink, [and] make a noise as through wine; *they shall shout*

\* As horses are used in war, Christ may be supposed by this action to have shown the humble and peaceful nature of his kingdom, and the happy effects of his gospel.



*for victory, as men that are almost intoxicated; and they shall be filled like bowls, [and] as the corners of the altar; they shall be filled with joy, as the corners of the altar are with blood.* 16 And the LORD their God shall save them in that day as the flock of his people; *as a shepherd doth his sheep: for [they shall be as] the stones of a crown, lifted up; he shall raise them to honour, and triumph in them, as a prince in his crown, or, as an ensign upon his land.* 17 For how great [is] his goodness, and how great [is] his beauty! corn shall make the young men cheerful, and new wine the maids; *great plenty shall attend their victories; the young men shall reap the corn, and the maids gather the grapes; their joy shall be as the joy of harvest, a religious joy, that shall all centre in God.*

## REFLECTIONS.

1. THE calamities of others should engage us *to look unto the Lord.* The eyes of all Israel, as of one man, turned to him, when his judgments fell upon the kingdoms around them. And it is a sign of God's favour when this is the case with any people, or any individual. Our eyes are apt to turn from him, many things in the world lead us to overlook him: but to him our attention and affections ought to be principally directed.

2. Let us adore the goodness of God, in raising up for us such a deliverer and prince as the Lord Jesus Christ. This prophecy was remarkably fulfilled in his triumphant entrance into Jerusalem, in his gentle character, and the happy effects of his gospel; in his great authority in heaven and earth, and his power to subdue his enemies, and protect and reward his subjects. He was peaceable himself; and his religion abounds with pacific maxims, which tend to promote peace as far as they prevail. We have great reason to rejoice in him as our king; for he brings inestimable blessings to his subjects, both for time and eternity. Let us pray that his kingdom may be supported and advanced, as the happiness of the world is so connected with it.

3. Let us be thankful that there is such a foundation laid by Christ and the gospel dispensation, for the hope of sinful creatures. What an affecting view is here given us of sinners; as *prisoners in a pit; in most distressing and hopeless circumstances; condemned, and perishing; yet delivered by the blood of the covenant; that everlasting covenant, which was sealed with the blood of Christ.* We are now, blessed be God, *prisoners of hope:*

our case is bad, but not desperate. There is a *strong hold* provided, where we may be safe, comfortable, and happy, and all sinners are invited *to turn to it*. May they all see their misery, so that the tidings of deliverance and salvation may be welcome to them, and they may be brought out of prison to praise God's name.

4. While we are thankful for these great mercies, let us not overlook the common bounties of providence. When we receive the blessings of the harvest, and gather in corn, that furnishes us with nourishing meat and drink, let us observe and admire the kindness of God herein. It is constant, large, and wonderful. Let us say, with constant and lively gratitude, *How great is his goodness!* and be careful never to pervert or abuse it: but when we eat, and are satisfied, *let us bless the name of the Lord, who dealeth so bountifully with us.*

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## CHAPTER X.

An exhortation to seek to God, and not to idols; as he visited his flock for sin, so he will save and restore them. The former part of this chapter refers still to the Maccabees; the latter part to the final restoration of the Jews.

1 **ASK** ye of the LORD rain in the time of the latter rain, *about March*, [so] the LORD shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain, to every one grass in the field; *all kinds of vegetables*. 2 For the idols have spoken vanity, and the diviners have seen a lie, and have told false dreams; they comfort in vain; *the favourable predictions of the false prophets before the captivity, all proved groundless and injurious*: therefore they went their way as a flock, *driven by their enemies into the wide places of the desert*; they were troubled, because [there was] no shepherd, *no king or ruler over them*.

3 Mine anger was kindled against the shepherds, *against the kings and rulers*, and I punished the goats, *or great men*: for, *or nevertheless*, the LORD of hosts hath visited his flock the house of Judah, *hath returned to his people in mercy*, and hath made them as his goodly horse in the battle; *given them strength and courage, and disposed them to submit to his will, like the eastern horses, which were remarkably obedient to their riders: this refers*

to his prospering their arms under the Maccabees. 4 Out of him, from Judah, came forth the corner stone, out of him the nail, out of him the battle bow, out of him every oppressor together; God will raise up among them those who shall be like corner-stones and nails in a building, and who shall bear down the united force of their enemies. 5 And they shall be as mighty [men,] which tread down [their enemies] in the mire of the streets in the battle: and they shall fight, because the LORD [is] with them, and the riders on horses shall be confounded; they shall gain many signal victories over the Syrian princes, whose chief strength lay in their cavalry. 6 And I will strengthen the house of Judah, and I will save the house of Joseph, and I will bring them again to place them; for I have mercy upon them: and they shall be as though I had not cast them off: for I [am] the LORD their God, and will hear them; many of the ten tribes, encouraged by these successes, shall return. 7 And [they of] Ephraim shall be like a mighty [man,] and their heart shall rejoice as through wine: yea, their children shall see [it,] and be glad; their heart shall rejoice in the LORD; they shall have lasting peace, and their children shall reap the benefits of the victories, in great prosperity and happiness. 8 I will hiss for them, or whistle, as the eastern shepherds call their sheep, and gather them; for I have redeemed them: and they shall increase as they have increased; that is, even during their captivity. This and the following verses probably relate to the Jews in the latter day. 9 And I will sow them among the people; I will multiply them among the nations where they are dispersed: and they shall remember me in far countries; and they shall live with their children, and turn again to their obedience to God by their conversion to christianity. 10 I will bring them again also out of the land of Egypt, and gather them out of Assyria\*; and I will bring them into the land of Gilead and Lebanon; and a sufficient [place] shall not be found for them; they shall be more numerous than their ancient boundaries can contain. 11 And he, that is, God, shall pass through the sea with affliction, or, with distress unto it, and shall smite the waves in the sea, and all the deeps of the river shall dry up; God's mighty arm shall be displayed again, in as wonderful a manner as in bringing their fathers out of Egypt: and the pride of Assyria shall be brought down, and the sceptre of Egypt shall depart away; Assyria and Egypt, all their opposers, shall be humbled. 12 And

\* This is proverbial; Egypt and Assyria are put for all the places where they were dispersed; so it is said, *Out of Egypt I called my Son.*

I will strengthen them in the LORD; and they shall walk up and down in his name, saith the LORD; *they shall be formed to an humble dependance upon God, be devoted to him, and supported by him* \*.

### REFLECTIONS.

1. THE providence of God is to be sought and owned in seasonable weather. Sunshine and rain in their seasons, are God's gifts, and are to be asked of him. None of the vanities of the heathen can give or restrain rain. Let us be careful to observe the course of his providence, that we may adore him as the God of nature, and give him the glory of all his bounties.

2. Let us look to him to raise up fit persons to support the interests of our country, who shall be as corner-stones, to sustain and adorn the building, and as nails, to keep the frames of it together. Such are wise and faithful ministers of state, active magistrates, and skilful, valiant commanders. God is the fountain of skill and power; can endow men with qualifications for great offices, fix them in them, and make their attempts to serve the public successful. We should have our public affairs better managed, and have less faction and contention, if we were more sensible of this, and more careful to pray for the prosperity of our country.

3. Let us look to God for wisdom and strength for ourselves, that we may *walk up and down in his name*; act by his direction, and aim at his glory; seeking success and comfort from him, and giving him the honour when we obtain them. Our concern should be to engage faithfully in his service, and daily to perform all the duties of the christian life. We need his assistance for this purpose; and should earnestly seek it, and hope for it: for *the God of Israel is he that giveth strength and power to his people. Bless ye the Lord.*

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\* This last chapter Mr. Orton did not deliver from the pulpit; here his manuscript copy ends. The remaining chapters of Zechariah, and the book of Malachi are drawn up by the Editor, from the materials found in Mr. Orton's interleaved bible; from Dr. Doddridge's notes, and Bp. Newcome's improved version.

## CHAPTER XI.

The three first verses of this chapter relate to the destruction of Jerusalem. The prophet then gives an account of the manner in which he discharged his office, and the little value that was put upon his labours. He is then directed to take instruments of destruction, expressive of the judgments which God was to inflict on the Jews by wicked rulers and guides, who would first destroy the flock, and, in the end be destroyed themselves.

1 **OPEN** thy doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour thy cedars; *the temple was built of cedar\**. 2 Howl, fir tree; for the cedar is fallen; *ye mean ones, mourn for the great*; because the mighty is spoiled: howl, O ye oaks of Bashan; for the forest of the vintage, *the defenced forest, or Jerusalem, which was as full of houses as a forest of trees*, is come down. 3 [There is] a voice of the howling of the shepherds, *of the rulers and governors*; for their glory is spoiled: a voice of the roaring of young lions; for the pride of Jordan is spoiled †.

4 Thus saith the LORD my God; Feed the flock of the slaughter; *the flock that has been wasted by many, and must be given up to slaughter‡*; 5 Whose possessors slay them, and hold themselves not guilty; *have no sense of the enormity of this conduct*: and they that sell them say, Blessed [be] the LORD; for I am rich; *they have the show of piety, while they practise the greatest injustice and cruelty*: and their own shepherds pity, *or spare*, them not. 6 For I will no more pity the inhabitants of the land, saith the LORD: but, lo, I will deliver the men every one into his neighbour's hand, and into the hand of his king: and they shall smite the land, and out of their hand I will not deliver

\* The Jewish writers tell us, that the great eastern gate of the temple was so heavy, that many men were necessary to open and shut it; yet that a little before the last siege it opened and shut of itself, and that Rabbi Johanna said on that occasion, 'Now is the temple near to be destroyed, since that word is fulfilled, *Open thy gates, O Lebanon*.'—JOSEPHUS, L. viii. chap. 12.

† Great men are compared to shepherds and lions, to intimate their superiority, and to young lions, hiding themselves in thickets, till Jordan, highly enraged, overflowed and drove them out.

‡ These words were directly spoken to Zechariah, and are intended as a figure of Christ.

[them\*.] 7 And I will feed the flock of slaughter, [even] you, or, because of you, O poor of the flock. And I took unto me two staves, or, two crooks; I assumed the appearance of a shepherd; the one I called Beauty, to denote how beautiful and pleasant the land would have been, if its inhabitants had kept their covenant with God, and the other I called Bands; to signify the union that ought to have subsisted between Judah and Israel, (see ver. 14.,) and I fed the flock. 8 Three shepherds also, that is, several evil governors, I cut off in one month, in a little time†; and my soul loathed them, and their soul also abhorred me. 9 Then said I, I will not feed you: that that dieth let it die; and that that is to be cut off, let it be cut off; and let the rest eat every one the flesh of another, and become a prey to famine. 10 And I took my staff, [even] Beauty, and cut it asunder, that I might break my covenant which I had made with all the people; by giving them up to destruction, I put an end to that beautiful constitution of things, which had before been settled among them, and which I would have established. 11 And it was broken in that day: and so the poor of the flock that waited upon me knew that it was the word of the LORD; acknowledged that the hand of God was therein. 12 And I said unto them, If ye think good, give [me] my price; and if not, forbear; if you think I deserve any thing from you, give me a meet recompense for all my care and pains with you. So they weighed for my price thirty [pieces] of silver; they rated them contemptuously: thirty pieces of silver being the price of a slave. 13 And the LORD said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prized at by them; as if he had said, Whatever affront they put on you they put on me, and I look on myself as injured that the services of my servant should be no more thought of. And I took the thirty [pieces] of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the LORD; as I received it in the temple I threw it to the potter who sat at the gate; to intimate that it was a fit price only for his contemptible ware‡. 14 Then I cut asunder mine other staff, [even]

\* This probably refers to the dreadful devastation brought on the Jews by the Romans, and by their quarrels among themselves. *The hand of his king*, many refer to the Roman emperor, who was now king of Judea, and treated the Jews with greater severity than could have been expected from the general character of Titus.

† This may particularly refer to the severity with which Christ reprov'd the scribes and pharisees. There were a great number of revolutions about this time in the high priesthood, which must occasion a revolution in other offices.

‡ This is applied by the evangelist to Christ, the great shepherd, who was valued at no more than thirty pieces, which were thrown down in the temple, and taken from thence, and given to the potter.

Bands, that I might break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel; *when I had received this affront, I conceived there was nothing more for me to do as a shepherd; I therefore broke my staff, and declared, that since they had despised my endeavours to unite them, they should be left to a spirit of discord.*

15 And the LORD said unto me, *Take unto thee yet the instruments of a foolish shepherd; a scrip that would contain nothing useful to the sheep, and a heavy staff that would hurt them.* 16 For, lo, I will raise up a shepherd in the land, *some wicked king,* [which] shall not visit those that be cut off, neither shall seek the young one, nor heal that that is broken, nor feed that that standeth still *through weakness,* but he shall eat the flesh of the fat, and tear their claws in pieces; *wear out their hoofs with over driving them.*

17 Woe to the idol shepherd that leaveth the flock! *the shepherd that acts in so foolish a manner, as to be but the useless image of a shepherd!* the sword [shall be] upon his arm, and upon his right eye: his arm shall be clean dried up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened; *the sword of God's wrath shall fall upon him; God shall weaken his power, confound his understanding, and leave him under a state of blindness and impotence.*

## REFLECTIONS.

1. LET us be very thankful that the fire of God's wrath is not sent out against us, *v. 1.* Our sins are many, and aggravated, like those of the Jews of old; and God might justly *have consumed us in his anger,* as he did them; have given our temples to the flames, and our dwellings to the fury of the enemy: he might have turned the roarings of those who revel, into howlings and lamentations. May we *hear, and fear, and do no more wickedly;* else the mercies we have received will not prevent the judgments we have deserved; but the more God has done for us, the heavier will those judgments be: and wicked princes and priests, who, instead of being shepherds, have been lions, may justly expect peculiar indignation.

2. Let us guard against every thing that looks like an association of devotion and immorality, *v. 5.* It is bad enough when men do ill, and get their gains by unrighteous methods, or by the oppression and sale of others; but it is worse, when they justify themselves in those methods, and say, *We are not guilty;* but most abominable of all, when they do this under the cloak of

religion, and say, *Blessed be the Lord, for I am rich*; though they have got their wealth by injustice, rapine, or murder. Let us remember, that *God abhors robbery for burnt offerings*; and that the worst of torments are prepared for *the hypocrites in Zion*.

3. We should be very thankful that Christ has not yet thrown up the pastoral care of us. He would have *fed the flock of the slaughter*, the obstinate Jews; but they regarded him not. He told them he was *the shepherd of the sheep*; but when he came to his own, his own received him not; they put no value on his offers, his labours, his tender concern for them; yea, *he was sold for thirty pieces of silver*; and those lions led him as a lamb to the slaughter, and tore him in pieces. But he still lives to exercise his pastoral care; to *feed his flock like a shepherd, to gather the lambs in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young*. He attends to the *poor of the flock*; feeds and supports the meanest and the weakest of his servants. *He leads them to green pastures, and still waters*; and when they pass through the valley of the shadow of death, his rod and his staff will comfort them. And he will give unto his sheep eternal life; and they shall never perish, nor shall any pluck them out of his hands.

4. We should not wonder if we are despised, and our endeavours to do good treated with contempt. Thus Zechariah was treated; they offered him for his labours the price of a slave. Thus was Christ *despised and rejected of men*; and thus many of his faithful ministers, have complained, *We have laboured in vain, we have spent our strength for nought; we have stretched out our hand all the day to gainsaying and disobedient people*. But God will remember all their works of faith and labours of love. *They that despise you, says Christ, despise me; and they who despise me, despise him that sent me*. God considers all the contempt which is thrown on faithful ministers, and their labours, as an affront done to himself; and they shall finally be a *sweet savour to God, in them that perish, as well as in them that are saved*.

5. Let us fear and avoid the judgment of the foolish shepherd, mentioned in the three last verses. While the former reflection reads a lesson to the people, God here reads an awful lesson to ministers; to every one who only takes the instruments of a foolish shepherd, but does not provide food or defence for the flock; who will not do the duty of a shepherd, will not instruct the ignorant, seek those that are gone astray, nor heal those that are wounded, nor support those that are feeble; who lives in



luxury himself, and oppresses those under his care; who is an *idol shepherd*, the mere image of a pastor; who *has eyes, but sees not, and ears, but hears not*; who, like an idol, receives abundance of respect and homage from the people, and the chiefest of their offerings, but neither can nor will do them any good. Woe to such a one! *the sword of God shall be on his arm and on his eye*; he shall lose both one and the other, so that he shall neither be able to see his own danger, nor defend himself when it comes upon him.

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## CHAPTER XII.

The first part of this chapter relates to an invasion that shall be made on the inhabitants of Judea in the latter ages of the world, and God's signal interposition in their favour; the latter part relates to spiritual mercies, and describes their sorrow when they shall be brought to a sense of their great sin in crucifying the Messiah.

1 **T**HE burden, *or, the prophecy*, of the word of the LORD for Israel, saith the LORD, which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him; *who is the author of all human wisdom.* 2 Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, *I will intoxicate all those who rise up against her, as if they had drank some poisonous draught, that shall disorder all their nerves, and throw them into trembling and confusion*, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah [and] against Jerusalem. 3 And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it; *they shall be as men who would roll a great stone up a hill, which at last returns upon them, and crushes them to pieces.* 4 In that day, saith the LORD, I will smite every horse with astonishment, and his rider with madness; *considerable forces of cavalry shall come up against them, (probably referring to the Turks, see Ezek. xxviii. 39.,) but they shall be confounded, and take wrong measures; their horses shall madly rush on to great danger and sudden destruction:* and I will open mine eyes upon the house of Judah, *will look upon them with complacency and regard*, and will smite every horse of the people with blindness. 5 And the governors of Judah shall say in their heart, The inhabitants of

Jerusalem [shall be] my strength in the LORD of hosts their God; *or, there is strength to me and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem in the Lord of hosts their God; that is, the greatest men shall own that their strength, and that of their capital, consists in the favour of God.*

6 In that day will I make the governors of Judah like a hearth of fire among the wood, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf; and they shall devour all the people round about, on the right hand and on the left; *I will spread destruction on all who attempt to injure them, suddenly and irresistibly:* and Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, [even] in Jerusalem. 7 The LORD also shall save the tents of Judah first, that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem do not magnify [themselves] against Judah; *this deliverance shall be wrought, not by the strength of the walls of Jerusalem, or the valour of its inhabitants, but, when the enemy shall come in like a flood, and the people are driven into the country around them, God shall begin the salvation in the open fields, and save the defenceless people; so that human prowess shall have no hand in this deliverance.* 8 In that day shall the LORD defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David [shall be] as God, as the angel of the LORD before them; *men shall act beyond their common force; and shall be so strengthened for the service to which they are called, that it shall be as if the common people, even the weakest among them, were raised to the strength, courage, and piety of David, and those that are most distinguished shall be improved to an angelic power and character.* 9 And it shall come to pass in that day, [that] I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.

10 And, *in order to introduce such a glorious scene,* I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me, *or rather, upon him,* whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for [his] only [son,] and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for [his] first born. 11 At that day there shall be a great mourning in Jerusalem, *not only as a single parent mourning for an only son, but the whole nation shall be deeply afflicted, (2 Kings xxiii. 29,) as the mourning of Hadadrimmon, a town in the valley of Megiddon, where Josiah was slain, over whom great lamentation was made.* 12 And the land shall mourn, *the whole Jewish nation, and the greatest men shall humble themselves on this account;* every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their

wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan, *a considerable branch of the house of David*, apart, and their wives apart; 13 The family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of Shimei, *or Simeon*, apart, and their wives apart; 14 All the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart; *in allusion to their funeral processions, or, times of great mourning, when it was customary for the men of the several families to go together, and their wives to go together after them, each by themselves; to denote a deep, retired sorrow, which rendered the mourners for a season insensible to all the comforts and enjoyments of the most endearing society.*

## REFLECTIONS.

1. FROM the majestic description which is here given of God, we should be led to adore him with the profoundest humility; v. 1. He not only stretched out the heavens at first, but still *stretcheth them out as a curtain*; and will continue to do so till the end come, *when the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll*. No bounds can be set to his power, who stretcheth out the heavens, nor can any thing be too hard for him, who *layeth the foundations of the earth*; keeps it firm, and fixed on its own axis, and governs the elements and the seasons. He also *formed the spirit of man within him*; gave us all our intellectual powers, and can influence them as he pleases. *Let our souls, and all that is within us, magnify the Lord, who made the heavens and the earth, who is the former of our bodies, and the father of our spirits, and the giver of all our enjoyments.*

2. Let us draw encouragement from the favour which shall be finally shown to the christian cause. Whatever clouds and darkness may be round about us, whatever enemies may arise to oppose the gospel; how much soever infidelity may triumph, iniquity abound, and the love of many wax cold; there certainly will be brighter, better, happier days. The gospel shall be *a cup of consolation* to all who embrace it; but *a cup of trembling* to those who oppose it. Though all people should unite together to destroy the kingdom of the Messiah, and the church of Christ, it will be a vain attempt. *This stone, cut out of the mountains without hands*, will not only *keep its place*, but *fill the whole earth*; and will finally *break in pieces all those who burden themselves with it*. *God will open his eyes*, that is, look favourably on his cause and interest, and strike with astonishment and madness all those who rise up against it. Let us then wish well to Zion from our hearts; pray for its

peace and prosperity; and rejoice that *there is strength for us*, and for all his people, *in the Lord of hosts, their God*.

3. We should long for that revival of the christian cause; *when he that is feeble shall be as David*, in a spiritual sense: when the happy time shall come, that princes and great men shall be good and holy men, and *make their boast*, not of their strength, their riches, and honours, but *of the Lord their God*. In that day religion shall raise its languishing head; *God will strengthen the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees*, of his servants; *they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint*; they shall be strong to resist every enemy and temptation, brave and skilful, even as David himself; yea, the weakest and feeblest shall be so. When God revives his church, he will make children, not only men in Christ, but champions; and those who are in high stations, and called out to greater services, he will make *as angels of the Lord*. He will increase the gifts and abilities of princes, magistrates, and all the people, in proportion to the respective services to which they are called. O blessed promise, and happy season when it shall be fulfilled! *Hasten it in thy good time, O Lord*. And in order to this, let us,

4. Wrestle with God, that he would put a spirit of evangelical repentance in a great measure upon us, and also upon his ancient people the Jews. When God has great mercies to bestow, he will *stir up the hearts* of his servants earnestly *to seek them*. In order to this, he will *pour out his Spirit upon them, and make known his words unto them*: he will awaken a just and deep sense of sin in their hearts; give them a spirit of grace, to sanctify them, and subdue their iniquities; and a spirit of supplication, inclining them to, and assisting them in, the duty of prayer. He will particularly teach them to *look upon Christ as pierced*, not by the Jews only, but by themselves; and this, not with a transient glance, or unaffected eye, but *they shall look and mourn, and that bitterly, as for the loss of an only son*. Thus genuine repentance and godly sorrow will express themselves. It is God's work to produce them in the heart; and, blessed be his name, we have his promise that he will do it. Let us pray for such a temper ourselves; it will be acceptable to God, honourable to Christ, and a sure token that *God will revive us again*. Let us supplicate it for the Jews, God's ancient people, to whom this promise peculiarly belongs; that they may embrace their own Messiah, partake of all gospel blessings, and see all these glorious prophecies concerning them accomplished.

## CHAP. XIII. and XIV. 1, 2.

Contain promises of pardon, and a deliverance from idolatry and false prophets; foretell the death of Christ, and the persecution of his disciples; the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, and the calamities consequent on that event.

1 **I**N that day, *at the time of Christ's crucifixion*, there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness; *the means of pardon and sanctification shall be offered to the Jews by the death of Christ, and upon the terms of the christian covenant.*

2 And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of hosts, [that] I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered\*: and also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land; *that is, a spirit of vice and wickedness, or, the prophet that has an unclean spirit.* 3 And it shall come to pass, [that] when any shall yet prophesy, then his father and his mother that begat him shall say unto him, Thou shalt not live; for thou speakest lies in the name of the LORD: and his father and his mother that begat him shall thrust him through when he prophesieth †. 4 And it shall come to pass in that day, [that] the prophets shall be ashamed every one of his vision, when he hath prophesied; neither shall they wear a rough garment to deceive: 5 But he shall say, I [am] no prophet, I [am] an husbandman; for man taught me to keep cattle from my youth ‡. 6 And [one] shall say unto him, What [are] these wounds in thine hands? *these marks, or punc-*

\* This either signifies abolishing idolatry in all christian churches, or putting away the superstition and corruption that had crept into the jewish; for idolatry had long since ceased.

† This is urged in favour of persecution; but it is probable the Jews on their first conversion may not be sensible of the abolition of the Mosaic law; till then they shall apprehend themselves as under a law to punish idolatry with death, according to Deut. xiii. 6., and so it intimates, that they shall have so much zeal against those that would turn them from the living God, or their own Messiah, that they would not spare even their own children.

‡ Before the conversion of the Jews there shall be false prophets and false Christs, who will put on the appearance of sanctity and strictness, like Elijah and John the Baptist; but these delusions shall then cease; and those who intended to turn them away from the Messiah, or to support idolatrous worship, shall some of them be made examples of, and others shall be ashamed to do it.

tures? *An allusion to the custom of setting marks of idolatrous deities in their hands; as the votaries of Bacchus had an ivy leaf painted on their hands. Then he shall answer, [Those] with which I was wounded [in] the house of my friends; these are not idolatrous marks, which I have made, but those of the master to whom I belong, or, which were made by my friends in infancy or childhood\*.*

7 Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, *the shepherd spoken of, chap. xi. 4., and also Ezek. xxiv. 33., the Messiah, appointed by me to feed my flock,* and against the man [that is] my fellow, *my intimate friend and associate, the man that is near and dear to me,* saith the LORD of hosts: smite the shepherd, *afflict, torment, and crucify him;* and the sheep shall be scattered; *his disciples shall forsake him, and the whole nation of the Jews shall be dispersed:* and, *or, nevertheless,* I will turn mine hand upon the little ones, *I will bring my poor, feeble people back again.* 8 And it shall come to pass, [that] in all the land, saith the Lord, two parts therein shall be cut off [and] die; but the third shall be left therein; *referring to the many devastations made among the Jews for a considerable space of time after the death of Christ, and especially by the Romans.* 9 And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It [is] my people; and they shall say, The Lord [is] my God; *after the Jewish nation have passed through many trials, they shall be taken into covenant again, and act and be treated as my peculiar people.*

CHAP. XIV. 1 Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. 2 For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; *the many nations who served under the Romans, including the greater part of the world then known;* and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half, *or, a portion,* of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city; *or rather, shall be translated; even the residue of the people that shall not be cut off, that is, those who are not destroyed by the cruelty of the siege, shall go into captivity. These two verses refer to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans.*

\* Though some suppose it refers to his being scourged as a false prophet, and his acknowledging those as his friends who had reclaimed him from prophesying by this means.

## REFLECTIONS.

1. LET us by faith apply ourselves to this *fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness*; v. 1. The inhabitants of Britain stand in need of it, as well as the inhabitants of Jerusalem. We are all guilty and polluted creatures, who want pardon and sanctification; and the blood of Christ was shed for this purpose. His wounded hands and feet, and pierced side, are the fountain from whence these blessings flow; the appointed means of forgiveness and cleansing; and *there is salvation in no other*. Hither then let us apply with humble faith and cheerful hope. If the sinners of Jerusalem, whose hands were imbrued in the blood of Christ, were not excluded from mercy; if this fountain was opened even for them who had murdered the Lord of life; surely the greatest offenders need not despair. It is a fountain that is inexhaustible, that flows, and shall for ever flow, for the benefit of all who apply to it. It is a fountain *opened*, and not *scaled*; and *whosoever will, may come and take of these waters freely*. This is an easy method of pardon and salvation; God does not demand any hard thing; only to *wash, and be clean*. Let us not reject the blessing nor quarrel with the method of obtaining it which God has appointed. All who are washed here, who are pardoned and sanctified through Christ, *shall be made kings and priests unto God*: but our Lord may say to each of us, as he said unto Peter on another occasion, *If I wash thee not, thou hast no part in me*.

2. We are led to acknowledge the goodness of God in giving his Son for us, though so near and dear to him. Though *his shepherd, his fellow, his companion, his delight, who lay in his bosom*; yet he gave him up to sufferings and death; yea, he called on the sword to awake against him; not merely to terrify, but to *smite* him; and all this, 'for us men, and our salvation.' How great an evil must sin be, and how hateful to God, when he took such an expensive method to remove from us the punishment due to it! how ready must God be to pardon, sanctify, and save all penitent sinners! And if *he spared not his own Son, but gave him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things?*

3. We should earnestly desire to be found in the number of Christ's sheep. *He is the good shepherd, who laid down his life for the sheep*: and he calls even us to *hear his voice and follow*

him as such; and happy are those who do so; for *he will give unto his sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of his hands.* They may sometimes be affrighted and scattered, persecuted and hunted as a prey, and seem *as sheep without a shepherd*: but God will *turn his hand upon them*; will preserve them from real evil, and recover them again to the fold. Christ will take care even of his *little ones*, the poorest and meanest among them: he will carry them in his arms, lay them in *his bosom*, and bring them safe to his green pastures and living streams in the heavenly world. Let this engage us to commit ourselves to his pastoral care, to obey his voice, and follow the footsteps of his flock. Then, whatever darkness, enemies, or dangers, may threaten us, we may holdly say, *The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want; his rod and his staff shall comfort me.*

4. Let us frequently and solemnly confirm our covenant with God through Christ, v. 9.; and be often saying, in retirement, in the family, in the house of God, and at the table of Christ, *The Lord is my God.* And let us be careful that our life and conversation correspond with such a declaration; that we *live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present evil world*; that we give ourselves to reading, meditation, and prayer; and *live in all holy obedience to his laws.* Then God will own us as his covenant servants; he will say concerning us, *This is my people, and I will be their God for ever and ever, and their guide even unto death.*

5. Let us not think it strange if we are called to trials and sufferings. God often sees it good to *bring his little remnant through the fire.* But it is *to refine them, as silver is refined in the furnace; and to try them, as gold is tried.* *Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth; but he does not afflict them for his pleasure, but for their profit; that they may be partakers of his holiness; and these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, he will support them under at present, and they shall finally work out for them a far more exceeding and an eternal weight of glory.*

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## CHAP. XIV. 3, to the end.

God in this chapter threatens destruction to the enemies of his people; the descendants of those nations who fought under the Roman standard, and who will be confederated with Gog and Magog when this vengeance overtakes them, (Ezek. xxxviii. 39. Rev. xx. 8, 9.) He will display his power in behalf of his people in a manner so astonishing and miraculous, (perhaps by a glorious appearance of the Messiah, ver. 4.,) that even they themselves, and much more their enemies, shall be struck with terror. Their prosperity shall then be permanent and unmixed, and they shall be made the instruments of converting other nations to the faith of the Messiah. The great increase and prosperity of the christian church, the new Jerusalem, is then described, (in terms accommodated to Jewish ideas,) and the most signal vengeance denounced against all his enemies. From that happy period God's name will be honoured in every thing, and his worship reverently observed in the minutest circumstances.

3 **T**HEN shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. 4 And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which [is] before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, [and there shall be] a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south\*. 5 And ye shall flee [to] the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, [and] all the saints with thee; *or rather, the valley of the mountain shall be filled up, for the valley of the mountain shall join to Azal, it shall be filled up as it was in the earthquake in the days of Uzziah, (see Josephus's Antiq. 9, 11.) By that earthquake mount Olivet was actually cleft asunder on the west side, and part of it was broken off, and removed to the distance of half a mile, and stopped between*

\* Many commentators have supposed that Christ will descend in person, and the mountains be removed; otherwise, it is a figurative expression of an extraordinary commotion.

*two mountains, and so filled up the valley. Whether this is to be understood literally, or is a strong figurative expression for a remarkable appearance of God, is uncertain.* 6 And it shall come to pass in that day, [that] the light shall not be clear, [nor] dark : 7 But it shall be one day which shall be known to the LORD, not day, nor night : but it shall come to pass, [that] at evening time it shall be light\*. 8 And it shall be in that day, [that] living waters, *the waters of divine truth*, shall go out from Jerusalem ; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea ; *a figurative expression referring to the wide effusion of divine knowledge from Jerusalem when restored* : in summer and in winter shall it be ; *the waters shall neither be dried by heat, nor stopped by frost ; nothing shall hinder the progress of divine knowledge and truth.*

9 And the LORD shall be king over all the earth : in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one ; *all shall forsake idolatry, and worship the one living and true God.* 10 All the land shall be turned as a plain, *and he shall encompass the whole land as a plain*, from Geba, north of Jerusalem, to Rimmon south of Jerusalem : and it shall be lifted up, and inhabited in her place, from Benjamin's gate unto the place of the first gate, unto the corner gate, and [from] the tower of Hamaneel unto the king's winepresses : *expressions which describe the populousness of Jerusalem in the latter day ; and as the city, in its former extent, would not then contain the inhabitants, God promises to make room for them by smoothing the neighbouring hills ; a strong argument that the Jews shall return to their own land.* 11 And [men] shall dwell in it, and there shall be no more utter destruction ; *no more curse there ; but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited.*

12 And this shall be the plague wherewith the LORD will smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem ; Their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, *without any apparent cause*, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth ; *they shall be struck with blindness, lameness, and dumbness.* 13 And it shall come to pass in that day, [that] a great tumult from the LORD shall be among them ; and they shall lay hold every one on the hand of his neighbour, and his hand shall rise up against the hand

\* Some think that this refers to the day of the Gospel dispensation in general, under which, hitherto, light and darkness have generally been blended ; and to its gradual clearing up toward the latter end.

of his neighbour ; *God will inspire them with a spirit of discord, so that they shall fall upon one another.* 14 And Judah also shall fight at Jerusalem ; *shall fight with it, or, for it ;* and the wealth of all the heathen round about shall be gathered together, gold, and silver, and apparel, in great abundance. 15 And so shall be the plague of the horse, of the mule, of the camel, and of the ass, and of all the beasts that shall be in these tents, as this plague ; *God shall not only destroy the enemies themselves, but all the cattle and instruments they made use of\**.

16 And it shall come to pass, [that] every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles†. 17 And it shall be, [that] whoso will not come up of [all] the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain.

18 And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, that [have] no [rain ;] there shall be the plague, wherewith the LORD will smite the heathen that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles ; *as the Egyptians usually have no rain, this may seem no threatening to them ; but shall there not be a plague? shall not God punish them some way or other, as well as other heathens?* 19 This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all nations that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles.

20 In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, **HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD** ; *great piety shall prevail, and God's name be honoured in every circumstance :* and the pots in the LORD's house shall be like the bowls before the altar ; *the meanest utensil in the house of God ( see Nehem. x. 39.) shall be as the vessels of silver and gold used in solemn sacrifices.* 21 Yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be Holiness unto the LORD of hosts : and all they that sacrifice shall come and take of them, and seethe therein : and in that day there shall be no more the Canaanite, *or, a trafficker,* in the house of the LORD of hosts ; *the utensils of the Jews shall be treated as holy, and the worshippers shall use them reverently. The idea of preparing food in them, is*

\* This makes it probable that it will be by a pestilential disorder ; and that the power of God shall be seen in preserving the Jews.

† God here uses figurative expressions, taken from the worship of the Jews at the temple, to express an attendance on christian ordinances. *Keeping the feast of tabernacles,* may mean, a proper commemoration of divine goodness.

*taken from the custom of feasting after a sacrifice, and no trafficker (see Ezek. xviii. 4.) shall pollute the house of God, as was customary when the Messiah cleansed the temple.*

### REFLECTIONS.

1. FROM the great encouragement here given, let us pray for the accomplishment of these promises; when *the Lord shall be king in all the earth*, and all idolatry shall be banished from the world: when God's ancient people shall again inhabit their own country, and their own city, and destruction be known no more. *Faithful is he who hath promised*, and he will accomplish it. *Let thy kingdom come, O Lord, and thy will be done on earth, as it is done in heaven.*

2. How happy are they that love Sion, for God loves it, and it shall prosper, and be *the joy of the whole earth*. Amidst the death of ministers, the decline of churches, the decay of piety and zeal, which so often afflict our hearts, let us cast a longing, believing eye, to those happy times, when *God will build up Sion*; repair all its breaches, and fill all its waste places: when Christ's kingdom shall be universal, and *the knowledge of the Lord cover the earth, as the waters do the sea*; when princes and magistrates, ministers and people, shall be filled with zeal for God, and their very *merchandise and hire shall be holiness to the Lord*; when *there shall be but one Lord, and his name One*; when all the nations that ever rose up against God and his people, shall every one be joined to his church, and pay their grateful tribute of praise to God, as the Jews used to do at their feast of tabernacles. Let this comfort our hearts, and encourage us still to *pray for the peace of Jerusalem, for they shall prosper that love her*. But, on the other hand,

3. Learn how much danger there is in opposing God, in being enemies to Christ's kingdom and people. *God will make their plagues wonderful; their flesh shall consume away, even while they stand on their feet*, and without any visible cause; yea they shall be dashed to pieces one against another, *v. 13. The heavens shall be as brass to them, there shall be no rain*; he will take from them their spoil, to enrich those whom they oppress; or bring plagues upon them and their cattle, and upon all that be in their tents.

God has ten thousand ways of punishing those who set themselves against him in this world ; and hereafter, *the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, to take vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not his gospel ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power. Let sinners hear, and fear, and do no more wickedly.*

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THE BOOK OF

THE PROPHET MALACHI.

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INTRODUCTION.

MALACHI, the last of the prophets of the Old Testament, lived some time after the rebuilding of the temple and city, probably about the latter end of the times of Ezra and Nehemiah, when zeal and piety were much decayed, God's worship corrupted, and many sins prevailed among priests and people. For these the prophet reproveth and threatens them; but encourages the godly, who, in such bad times, continued faithful. He then speaks more distinctly of the coming of Christ, and his forerunner John the Baptist; till which time they were carefully to observe the law, and look for no further succession of prophets.

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CHAPTER I.

Malachi here complains of Israel's unkindness, and of their irreligion and profaneness.

1 **T**HE burden, or prophecy, of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi, *my messenger*. 2 I have loved you, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? [Was] not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the LORD: yet I loved Jacob, and gave him great external privileges; 3 And I hated Esau, I showed him less love, by giving him an inferior lot, and now have laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness. 4 Whereas Edom saith, We are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places; thus saith the LORD of hosts, They shall build, but I will throw down; and they shall call them, The border of wickedness, and, The people against whom the LORD hath indignation for ever\*. 5 And your eyes shall see, *the eyes of*

\* The Edomites thought they might be restored, and have a little rest by it; but the contrary appeared soon after, for Uzziah brought terrible desolation among them, so that (as Josephus says) scarce an Edomite was left.

*the Jews in succeeding ages shall see the appearances of divine Providence in this respect, and ye shall say, The LORD will be magnified from the border of Israel; or beyond the border of Israel, that is, in other countries.*

6 A son honoureth [his] father, and a servant his master: if then I [be] a father, where [is] mine honour? and if I [be] a master, where [is] my fear? saith the LORD of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name? *I answer, Look at the state of my temple, and then see wherein ye have despised me:* 7 Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the LORD [is] contemptible; *whatever you profess, you say, by your actions, The table of the Lord is contemptible; and you think any bread good enough for a meat offering.* 8 And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, [is it] not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, [is it] not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the LORD of hosts\*? 9 And now, I pray you, *humble yourselves, O ye priests, and as ye have been first in your offence, so be first in your repentance, and beseech God that he will be gracious unto us: this hath been by your means: will he regard your persons?* saith the LORD of hosts: *will he excuse you because you are priests? will he not rather punish you on that account with greater severity?* 10 Who [is there] even among you that would shut the doors [for nought?] neither do ye kindle [fire] on mine altar for nought: *I have sufficiently rewarded you for every service you have done for me; or, as some render it, Surely the doors shall be closed against you, neither shall ye kindle the fire on my altar in vain.* I have no pleasure in you, saith the LORD of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand.—*Then follows a prophecy of the conversion of the Gentiles, and, as usual, under Jewish images.* 11 For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same, my name [shall be] great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense [shall be] offered unto my name †, and a pure offering ‡: for my name [shall be] great among the heathen, saith the LORD of hosts. 12 But ye have profaned it, in that ye say, The table, *that is, the altar, of the LORD [is] polluted; and the fruit thereof, [even] his meat, is contemptible; or, as it may be translated, ‘And*

\* Gifts of this nature were customarily made in the east to great persons, and are so to this day.

† Limborch thinks that this intimates the abolition of the Mo-aic law.

‡ Mede supposes that this refers to the Lord's supper.

as to what is offered thereon, its food is despicable.' 13 Ye said also, Behold, what a weariness [is it!] and ye have snuffed at it, saith the LORD of hosts; *you say, that attendance on the altar, and partaking of its sacrifices, are a burdensome task, and ye turn from them with disgust*; and ye brought [that which was] torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye brought an offering: should I accept this of your hand? saith the LORD.

14 But cursed [be] the deceiver, *whether of the priests or the people*, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth, and sacrificeth unto the LORD a corrupt thing, *when he hath a better to offer*: for I [am] a great King, saith the LORD of hosts, and my name [is] dreadful among the heathen, *though they do not particularly know me*.

### REFLECTIONS.

1. WE are here taught not to despise the distinguishing favours of God to us, v. 2. He hath shown us great kindness as a nation, in delivering us from heathenish darkness, from popery, and from surrounding enemies; he hath given us a pleasant and fruitful land; we have good laws, a happy constitution of government, under which our persons and properties are secured; we have civil and religious liberty, and can worship God without being made afraid. Surely then *God hath loved us*, and distinguished us above many nations. Let us never be unmindful of these benefits, nor ungratefully say, *Wherein hast thou loved us?* Nothing shows a worse temper, nor indicates a worse character, than ingratitude for past favours, and insensibility of present mercies and comforts. Let us *call on our souls to bless the Lord, and not forget any of his benefits*; and be often saying, *Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!*

2. Let us maintain a disposition and behaviour toward God, answerable to his character, and the relations in which he stands to us; v. 6. Is he our master? let us think what a wise, good, powerful, honourable, and bountiful master he is, and regard him accordingly. Let us cheerfully obey his orders; let our eyes wait upon him, and our hearts rejoice at every intimation of his will. Like good servants, let us improve our talents, and be faithful to our trust. Let us *speak honourably of God*; endeavour to promote his interest, and fear his displeasure above all things. Is he a father? let us ever look to him under this endearing character;



let us reverence his wisdom, which is infinite; seek direction, counsel, and wisdom from him, *who giveth liberally, and upbraideth not*. Let us rejoice in his affection to us; for, *as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him*. Let us trust his care, esteem ourselves happy in his presence and converse, and in all things approve ourselves his humble, obedient, holy, and happy children; and act in a manner becoming *the sons and daughters of the Lord almighty*.

3. Let us avoid a mercenary temper in religion, *v. 10.*, and the character of those who would not shut the temple doors, nor light a fire on the altar, for nought. There are too many like these, both among priests and people; who will not take a step in God's service, nor do the least office for his house, or for their poor neighbours, unless they can get by it. Such services cannot be acceptable to God. *I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord of hosts, neither will I accept the offerings at your hands*. Though God hath given orders that his servants should be well paid, even in this world; yet those are not acceptable servants to him, who are mercenary, and would never do the work but for the wages.

4. Let us long for the universal spread of the gospel. We should often direct the eye of faith to those delightful promises, which, through all the darkness of the prophecies, sparkle like stars in the midnight sky. Let us treasure them up in our memory, in order to strengthen our faith and hope, and animate our devotion. Let us accustom ourselves to turn these promises into prayers, and say, as in *v. 11.*, *from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same, let thy name be great among the Gentiles; and in every place let incense be offered unto thy name and a pure offering: O Lord of hosts, let thy name be great through all the earth*.

5. We should all be concerned to serve God with the best that we have. He is a great king, and deserves the best we can offer him. He is the proprietor and giver of all, and therefore has a right to the best. Let him therefore have our best days, our best affections, our best powers and capacities; the best of our time, and talents, and strength; nor should we grudge any pains or expense to serve and honour him. Let us not think to put God off with *the torn, the lame, and the sick*, that is, with the refuse of our time, our strength, and our substance, that which we know not how to employ any other way. God will meet such persons with this awful question; *Should I accept this at your hands?* and will

follow it with this awful sentence, *Cursed be the deceiver, saith the great king, the Lord of hosts, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth, and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing.*

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## CHAP. II. 1—16.

The prophet continues to reprove the priests for their unfaithfulness in their office; and the people for marrying strange and idolatrous women.

1 **AND** now, O ye priests, this commandment [is] for you, *to whom it chiefly belongs to reform abuses in the worship of God.* 2 If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay [it] to heart, to give glory unto my name, saith the LORD of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings; *that is, the portion of the priests: yea, I have cursed them already, by sending you unfruitful seasons,* because ye do not lay [it] to heart. 3 Behold, I will corrupt your seed, *or, as it should be rendered, 'I will take away from you the shoulder,' which was the part that belonged to the priest,* and spread dung upon your faces, [even] the dung of your solemn feasts; *than which nothing could be a greater token of contempt; yea, I will cover you with it, so that nothing else shall be seen, and all must look upon you as totally polluted;* and [one,] *that is, the scavenger,* shall take you away with it. 4 And ye shall know that I have sent this commandment unto you, that my covenant might be with Levi, saith the LORD of hosts; *or, because my covenant was with him, and I have showed him and his posterity particular favour.* 5 My covenant was with him of life and peace; *the peculiar covenant of the priesthood, which was an honourable, important, and profitable office;* and I gave them to him [for] the fear wherewith he feared me, and was afraid before my name; *for his great piety.* 6 The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips; *this was the case with the tribe while they continued pious: he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity.* 7 For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, *he should be able and ready to instruct others,* and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he [is] the messenger of the LORD of hosts; *or, the angel of the church.* 8 But ye are departed out of the way; ye have

caused many to stumble at the law : ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, *by a misrepresentation of it*, saith the LORD of hosts. 9 Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, *that ye should neither be revered nor regarded*, according as ye have not kept my ways, but have been partial in the law ; *either in giving judgment or taking bribes ; having one decision for the poor, and another for the rich.*

10 Have we not all one father ? hath not one God created us ? *we ought therefore to behave in a friendly and loving manner to all : why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers ? in consequence of this covenant of peculiarity we should have had no connexion with idolaters.*

11 Judah hath dealt treacherously, and an abomination is committed in Israel and in Jerusalem ; for Judah hath profaned the holiness of the LORD which he loved, *his holy institutions*, and hath married the daughter of a strange god ; *that is, a worshipper of a different god from Jehovah.* 12 The LORD will cut off the man that doeth this, the master and the scholar out of the tabernacles of Jacob ; *or, him that waketh, and him that answereth ; in allusion to teachers calling their pupils early in the morning, and the scholar answering at the first call, and him that offereth an offering unto the LORD of hosts.*

13 And this have ye done again, *ye have committed another fault upon occasion of the former of marrying strange wives*, covering the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping, and with crying out, insomuch that he regardeth not the offering any more, or receiveth [it] with good will at your hand ; *he doth not receive it as an acceptable sacrifice.* 14 Yet ye say, *Wherefore should we not be accepted ?* Because the LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously : yet [is] she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. 15 And did not he make one ? *that is, one wife for Adam ?* Yet had he the residue of the spirit ; *and could have made a hundred, or a thousand.* And wherefore one ? That he might seek a godly seed ; *a strong argument against polygamy ; which, though tolerated, was never approved.* God knew that if it had been encouraged, the consequences would have been enmity among the different wives and their respective children ; *and less care in their education.* Therefore take heed to your spirit, keep a guard upon your affections, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth. 16 For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away : for [one,] *or, as one that covereth*

violence with his garment, saith the LORD of hosts; *God hateth divorcements, as he doth him that endeavoureth to conceal under his garment what he hath taken by violence: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously.*

### REFLECTIONS.

1. LET us give glory to God that his curse is not come into our blessings, v. 2., that there is not a worm at the root of all our comforts, to eat up and destroy them. *If we will not hear God's law, and lay it to heart; seriously and attentively consider it, try our hearts by it, and give glory to his name, by repentance and reformation; he can send a curse into our blessings; make our plenty and prosperity to be our plague and ruin. We have reason to fear this is often the case; the rich and great and prosperous are often miserable, amidst all their stores; and we here see the cause of it; they will not lay God's word to heart, nor give glory to his name; therefore he curses their blessings: agreeably to what Solomon says, The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked, but he blesseth the habitation of the just.*

2. If we desire to enjoy the blessing and success of Levi, we should imitate his character, v. 6., God made with the tribe of Levi a covenant of life and peace. He confirmed the priesthood to them; which was intended for the support of religion, and to bring life and peace to the souls of men. Under the New Testament, God enters into a similar covenant with all good men: *he makes them kings and priests unto God, and promises life from the dead, and peace and comfort to their souls. If we desire to share in these blessings, we must preserve the character of God's ancient servants. They feared God, and were afraid before his name; afraid to do any thing to displease or dishonour him. This was the great principle of religion in their hearts, and it expressed itself in their lips and lives. They spake truth, and no deceit was in their lips. They walked in peace and love among themselves and their neighbours; in equity and justice toward all men. They were zealous for God and his service; studied the law of God themselves; taught it to others; and turned many from iniquity. If this be our character, God will establish with us a covenant of life and peace. He will bless our blessings; sanctify our afflictions; make us honourable and happy in this world; and we shall shine as the sun in the kingdom of our Father for ever.*

3. Let us often reflect on our common relation to God and to each other; *v. 10., Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us?* Are we not all children of the same father; brethren of the same family; and bound by the same laws, the same ties of obligation, gratitude, and love? Why, then, should we injure and persecute one another? *Why should we deal treacherously every man against his brother?* Why should there be any wrath, or malice, or hatred, or enmity among us? If we call God our creator, let us remember that we are all equally obliged to him, and dependant upon him. If we call God our father, let us *live as brethren; be imitators of God, as dear children, and walk in love.* Let us *do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with him:* otherwise, God will disown the relation; *he that made us, will have no mercy on us; he that formed us will show us no favour.*

4. We should often think of God as a witness to the manner in which we discharge our relative duties. It is of great importance to remember that his eye is continually upon us; and to consider him as a witness how we perform the duties we owe to our wives, our children, our servants, and all under our care. This will be a constant check to passion, pride, cruelty, and unfaithfulness; and a constant motive to duty, love, and kindness. The day is coming when this witness will give in evidence for us, or against us; and it will be 'the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.' *Brethren, if our consciences condemn us not, of wilfully neglecting the duties we owe to those about us, then we may have confidence with God, and humbly hope that he will have mercy on us. But if our consciences do indeed condemn us, remember, God is greater than our hearts, and knows all things. Therefore, take heed to your spirits, that you deal not treacherously.*

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## CHAP. II. 17. and CHAP. III. 1—15.

The prophet reproves the Jews for their immoralities and impieties, for their withholding legal tithes and offerings, and their hard and profane speeches against Providence; and declares that God will make a fearful distinction between the righteous and the wicked.

17 **Y**E have wearied the LORD with your words. Yet ye say, *in a profane and contemptuous manner, Wherein have we wearied [him?]* When ye say, or rather, *in that ye say, Every one that*

doeth evil [is] good in the sight of the LORD, and he delighteth in them; or, Where [is] the God of judgment? *either there is no God at all, or he is very slow in executing judgment and punishing the wicked.*

CHAP. III. 1 Behold, I will send my messenger, *John the Baptist*, (Matt. xi. 10.), and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, *the Messiah*, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, *just after the appearance of his forerunner*, even the messenger of the covenant; *he, who shall establish a new covenant between me and mankind*, whom ye delight in, and earnestly wish to appear: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts. 2 But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? *men shall then undergo a strict scrutiny; and he shall clearly show that I delight in him that doeth good, and will execute vengeance on the wicked: for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' sope; he shall consume the wicked by his judgments, and purify those who are sincere, by his doctrine.* 3 And he shall sit [as] a refiner and purifier of silver; *he shall be diligently employed in his office: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness; he shall produce a great reformation among the priests and people, and not only cleanse them from external spots, but refine and purify their souls.* 4 Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem, *that is, of the christian church, especially in the latter day*, be pleasant unto the LORD, as in the days of old, and as in former years. 5 And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness; *whose heart is so full of the cause, and so desirous to convict a malefactor, that he makes haste, pressing into court that he may give in his evidence against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in [his] wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger [from his right,] and fear not me, saith the LORD of hosts; crimes which shall prevail among the Jews in Christ's time.* 6 For, *or, nevertheless*, I [am] the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed; *I will not entirely destroy them.*

7 Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept [them.] Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the LORD of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return? *what is there in us that needs to be reformed?*

8 Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. 9 Ye [are] cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, [even] this whole nation. 10 Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that [there shall] not [be room] enough [to receive it;] *you make the present scarcity an excuse for not bringing tithes, but that is a reason why you should bring them all, and so secure my blessing.* Opening the windows of heaven is a proverbial expression for great plenty. 11 And I will rebuke the devourer, *the locust, caterpillar, canker-worm, &c., or, whatever destroys the fruits of the earth,* for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts. 12 And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the LORD of hosts; *the nations who have reflected upon your country as barren, and upon your God as having cast you off, upon the return of plenty shall judge otherwise.*

13 Your words have been stout, *or, bold and blasphemous,* against me, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, What have we spoken [so much] against thee? 14 Ye have said, It [is] vain to serve God: and what profit [is it] that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the LORD of hosts; *with prayer and fasting, in sackcloth and ashes?* 15 And now we have reason to call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, [they that] tempt God are even delivered; *their houses and families are built up, and those who seem to challenge and provoke God to his face, are delivered by his providence, not only from the sufferings which good men endure, but recovered from afflictions into which they fall.*

## REFLECTIONS.

1. WE should be very careful not rashly to conclude, from the present appearances of providence, that religion is an unprofitable thing; or, that *every one who doeth evil is good in the sight of the Lord*: or say, with these wicked Jews, *Where is the God of judgment?* he hath forsaken the earth, and taketh no notice of what is said or done there; he hath said he will come to judgment,

but *where is the promise of his coming?* Such scoffers as these there were in the latter end of the Jewish church, and such there shall be in the latter days of the Christian church; but their unbelief *shall not make the promise of God of none effect, for the day of the Lord will come*; and an awful and everlasting distinction be made *between him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not; the righteous shall go away into life eternal, but the wicked into everlasting punishment.*

2. Let us bless God that Christ is sent as *the messenger of the covenant*, to declare the will of God and unveil futurity. John prepared the way before him, and pointed him out to the people; at length he appeared with the fullest proofs of his divine commission, to negotiate peace, to settle a correspondence between God and man, to offer pardon, to promise divine aids, and acceptance through his sacrifice and mediation; to reveal a judgment to come, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. *Blessed are our eyes that see, and our ears that hear, those things, which kings, and prophets, and mighty men of old, desired to see and hear, but were not so highly favoured.* Let us cordially embrace this Saviour; submit to his method of salvation; fear his threatenings; trust his promises; follow his example; and say, *Hosannah to the Son of David! Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord.*

3. Let us seriously inquire, what effect the appearance of Christ and his gospel have had upon us. Has he been to us *as a refiner's fire, and as fullers' sope?* It will signify nothing to rejoice in his appearance, and approve his undertaking, and welcome him with the loudest hosannahs, if we are not purified from sin; if our angry, turbulent, and sensual passions have not been subdued, or at least governed and restrained. If our hearts are devoted to God, and fixed upon him; if our affections are raised to heaven, as a world of devotion, purity, and love, and made to delight in holy duties, and in offering unto the Lord the offerings of righteousness; if this is indeed our temper and character, we have not received the grace of God in vain, all the blessings of the covenant will be ours; and we may rejoice in the second coming of Christ, when *our faith will be found to praise and honour and glory.*

4. Let us above all things dread the thought of having God *a witness against us* at that day. *He will soon come near to us to judgment, v. 5. We must all appear before his bar, and give an*



*account of all things done in the body, whether good or evil; and then he will be a swift witness against all those who have broken his laws, and rejected his gospel and covenant; he will bring such evidence against them, as they cannot gainsay; such judgment, as they cannot escape.*

5. Let us adore his immutability, *v. 6.* It is owing to this that we are not consumed; *he is mindful of his promise and of his covenant: he was so to the sons of Jacob; and he will be so under every dispensation, to the end of time. We have to do with a God that changeth not; therefore it is that we are not consumed.* While this speaks terror to the guilty, it speaks comfort to his faithful servants; and they ought to *rejoice in God who keepeth his covenant and his mercy for ever.* Once more,

6. Reformation is the way to prosperity and happiness. How much soever we have neglected God's ordinances, and robbed him of the offerings due to him, of our services and our hearts; yet, *saith the Lord of hosts, if ye will return unto me, I will return unto you.* Let us then all be engaged to do so by humble penitence and prayer; by faith in Christ, and by new and better obedience; then will he prosper us *according to the days in which we have been afflicted, and the years wherein we have seen evil.* He will give us *the blessings of heaven above, and the earth beneath;* and deliver us from our enemies and fears. Or, if he withholdeth great things from us here, he will *bleſs our bleſſings,* be they ever so few and small; and this will be as a constant feast: he will open heaven to our view, and finally *receive us to his eternal kingdom.* Only prove me, saith the Lord; make a trial whether it will not be so. Let us all make the trial immediately, and trust a faithful God, *who is able to do for us exceeding abundantly above all we can either ask or think.*

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## CHAP. III. 16, to the end. CHAP. IV.

God here distinguishes between the righteous and the wicked ; he threatens awful judgments to the one, and promises salvation to the other, under a future and approaching dispensation ; and then, with a solemnity becoming the last of the prophets, he closes the sacred canon, with enjoining the strict observance of the law, till the forerunner, already promised, should appear in the spirit of Elias, to introduce the Messiah, and begin a new and everlasting dispensation.

16 **T**HEN they that feared the LORD, spake often one to another : and the LORD hearkened and heard [it:] and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name, *his perfections, and providence, and consulted his glory.* 17 And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels ; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. 18 Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.

CHAP. IV. 1 For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven ; and the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble : and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch ; *a proverbial expression, denoting the utter destruction of Jerusalem : and it is also applicable to the final judgment\*.*

2 But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings, *or rays ;* and ye shall go forth *to the pasture,* and grow up, *or, thrive and be happy,* as calves of the stall. 3 And ye shall tread down the wicked, *subdue and triumph over your enemies ;* for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do [this,] saith the LORD of hosts †.

4 Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I com-

\* The world, in this and the preceding verses, is compared to an house on fire ; God to the master and father ; the wicked, to the useless lumber ; the saints and children of God, to jewels. These his principal care is exerted about ; these he will be sure to save, whatever becomes of the rest.

† This refers to the safety of christians when Jerusalem was destroyed, and their triumph over their inuaplacable enemies, when the Romans conquered them.

manded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, [with] the statutes and judgments. *A proper admonition, both to correct the irregularities before reprov'd, and to instruct them how to behave, now prophecy was to cease: you are still to regard the law, but to keep up an expectation of the Messiah, whom Moses, as well as the succeeding prophets, spoke of. The gift of prophecy being now to cease, you must be sure to have recourse to the written word.*

5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet\*, *that is, John the Baptist, who came in the spirit and power of Elias, (Luke i. 17.,) before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD; when he shall take vengeance on the Jews by the Roman armies; hence John warn'd them to fly from the wrath to come.* 6 And he shall turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers; *John's doctrine shall be adapted to turn men to repentance, to touch the hearts of fathers and children, both old and young; and promote union and friendship among all, by directing all to their great master and prophet, the promised Messiah; lest I come and smite the earth with a curse; the whole land of Judea with utter desolation. This was the consequence of their rejecting Christ; and both they and their land lie under it to this day.*

### REFLECTIONS.

1. LET us imitate the piety of this little remnant, and encourage ourselves with their hope. Observe their character; they *feared God, they thought on his name, on his majesty, his perfections, his works, and his promises; and their meditation was sweet. They spake often one to another, concerning the God they feared, and the name they thought upon; they kept together, as suitable companions to each other, and this in the most degenerate times. A good example for us all, and especially for young people, not to forsake the assembling of themselves together for prayer and religious conversation, and other devotional exercises. When vice is bold, let not the friends of religion be fearful and ashamed. Observe how God honoured them; the Lord hearkened and heard it; he paid peculiar attention to them, and was well pleased with them; he kept an account of their meetings and conferences; every good word and every good work, and every pious attempt to strengthen each other's hands in God, were registered before him. And such*

\* Some of the Jews expected Elijah himself; others, 'a prophet in his spirit: hence they asked John the Baptist, *Art thou Elijah, or that prophet?*

persons are still precious in his sight, he esteems them *his jewels*; he will treat them now, as a father dealeth with a beloved son that serveth him; and hereafter he will crown this grace with glory; *they shall be mine, saith the Lord, in that day when I make up my jewels*; and Christ will say to them, *Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you*. Let us follow their example, and we shall share in their honour and happiness. On the other hand,

2. Let us dread the doom of the wicked, *chap. iv. 1.* There will be a terrible day, *which shall burn as an oven*; and the fuel which is prepared for it are *the proud in heart, whose words have been stout against God, and all who have done wickedly*. Whatever their wickedness be, God sees it all; and *that day shall burn them up as stubble is consumed by the flame*: it shall leave them neither root nor branch; completely destroy all their hopes, and plunge them into misery and despair. *God will rain upon them snares, fire, and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup*. Therefore let us come out from among them, and not partake of their sins, lest we partake of their plagues. Finally,

3. Let us be thankful that *the Sun of righteousness hath risen upon us*: let us walk in his light, and seek healing and salvation from his beams. We have reason to be thankful every day for the beams of the natural sun; but we have greater reason to be thankful for the beams of the Sun of righteousness, whose coming is *as the light of the morning, when the sun ariseth, even a morning without clouds*. Through the tender mercy of God, *this day-spring from on high hath visited this benighted world*; a world which sat in darkness, and in the shadow of death. Let us be thankful that he hath risen on Britain. Gross darkness once spread over us; but we are now *light in the Lord*. Let us be particularly thankful if he hath risen upon our souls with his healing, invigorating, and comforting influences; if he hath not only enlightened our eyes, but healed our moral diseases. Let us give thanks to the Father, *who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son*; and be especially careful to walk in the light. Let us wisely and diligently improve the advantages we enjoy in consequence of the Redeemer's appearance, and *work the works of him that sent us while it is day*. And let us earnestly desire those further supplies of light and life from Jesus Christ, which may make us, in our lesser spheres, *shine as lights in the world*, to the honour of him, whose beams we reflect, to the credit

of our profession, and to the good of others. Arise, O Sun of righteousness, and shine on all the earth! Convert and heal every nation, that this dark world may become an emblem of those holy and happy regions, where thou livest and reignest for ever! *Amen!*

NOW UNTO THE KING ETERNAL, IMMORTAL, INVISIBLE,  
THE ONLY WISE GOD, BE GLORY FOR EVER AND EVER!  
AMEN.

THE END.



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