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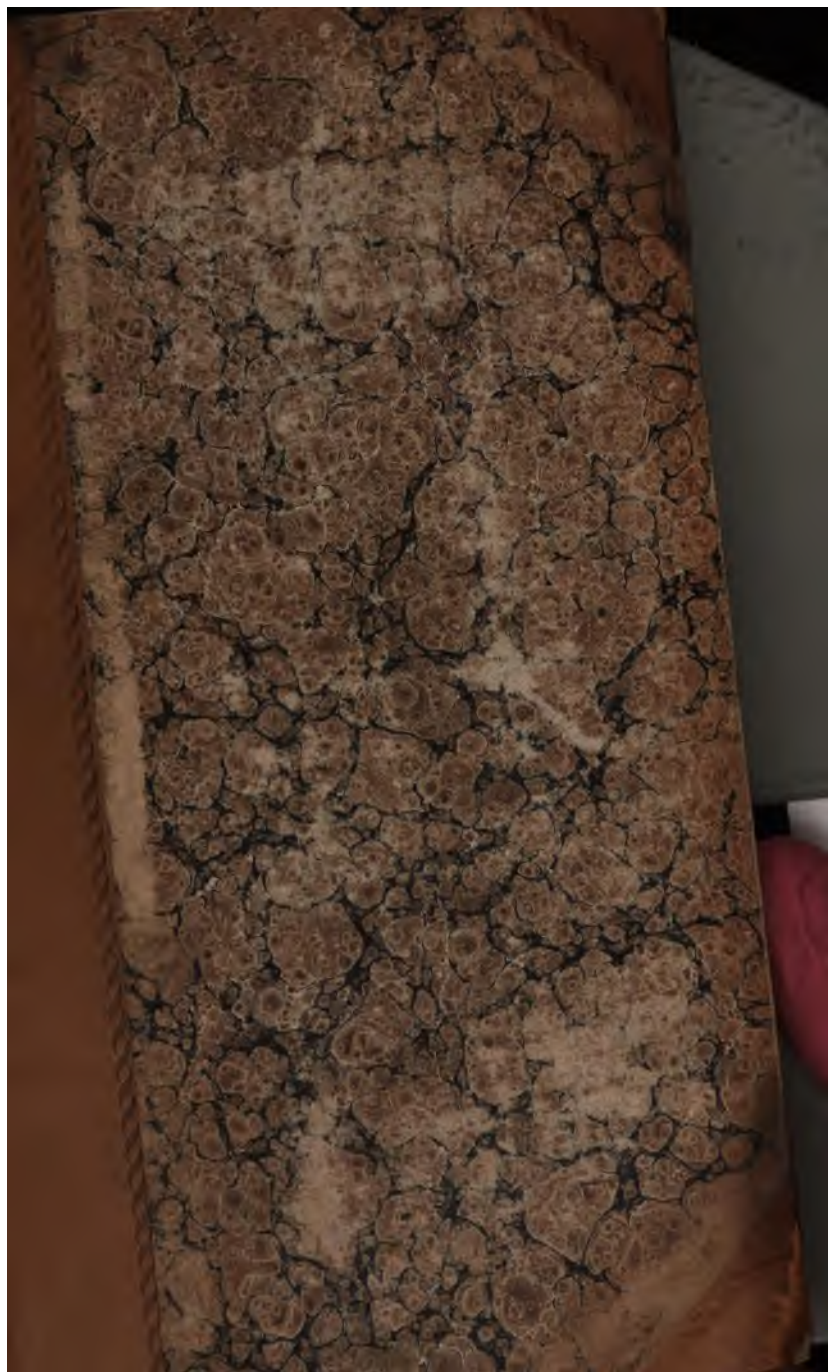
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L. H. 1829.

JESUS, THE MESSIAH;

OR, THE

OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECIES

FULFILLED

IN THE

NEW TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES.

BY A LADY.



The Profits will be devoted to Charitable Purposes.

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MILLS, JOWETT, AND KILLS. PRINTERS.
BOLT-COURT, FLEET-STREET.

DEDICATION.

TO THE

RIGHT REV. CHARLES RICHARD,

LORD BISHOP OF WINCHESTER.

MY LORD,

I HAVE been induced to solicit the honour of dedicating this little work to your Lordship from the conviction that its contents are not only consonant with the Doctrines and Articles of that Church of which your Lordship is so bright an ornament, but that they are in unison with the truths of Divine Revelation, that perfect standard by which all Theology and Morality must be judged. My object in presenting it to

stances, are debarred access to, or are not inclined to read, works of a more extensive kind.

While the writer has no disposition to despise that criticism which, if impartially administered, is the best safeguard of the press, neither would she timidly shrink from investigation; aware that no partiality of friends can long buoy up an unworthy production.

This is not intended as the language of indifference, but arises from a consciousness of the purity of motive, and the desire to do good, which have actuated her; compared with which, all other considerations are momentary and unsatisfying.

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And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and

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ERRATA.

Page 77, line 22, for *production*, read *productions*.

163, line 4, insert *they* before *approach*.

242, line 8, for *sahl*, read *shall*.

JESUS, THE MESSIAH.

CHAPTER I.

I will put enmity between thee and the Woman, and between thy seed and her seed ; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.—Gen. iii. 15.

THIS is the first intimation we meet with of the promised Messiah, and within this one verse is contained, as in the bud, the embryo flower, that goodly plant of renown,* which the Lord hath planted, and not man ; he who is the rose of Sharon and the valley's lilly.† It is an epitome of the whole plan of Redemption, and contains truths of the first importance ; we shall do well to consider them in reference to Jesus of Nazareth. The prophecy declares there shall be enmity between the seed of the woman and the serpent. The incarnation and birth of Jesus have, by the Evangelists Matthew and Luke, been so fully stated, that none but a strongly prejudiced mind can

* Isaiah liii. 2. Ezek. xxxiv. 29. † Cant. ii. 1.

deny that he was the son of Mary, then a virgin, and that Joseph was only his supposed father, because he married his mother.* The old serpent, or as he is frequently called, Satan, discovered his enmity towards Jesus from his birth; he stirred up the mind of Herod to destroy the holy child, Jesus, and thus originated the massacre of the infants of Bethlehem. Though disappointed, he personally attempted his destruction, and for forty days and nights did he try the force of his arts to tempt Jesus to sin.† And, though foiled, he again resumed the attack, and suggested to the minds of the Scribes and Pharisees, priests and people, to persecute the man “who spake as never man spake.” It is said he entered into, *i.e.* took full possession of, the mind of Judas,‡ who betrayed Jesus, and also acted as guide to those who took him. Was not Satan the ringleader of those who crucified him, in whom his Judges declared, they could find no fault worthy of death? Let us now behold the opposition displayed by Jesus towards the serpent and his seed. A great part of his life appears

* Matthew i. 18—25. Luke i. 27. 30—35., ii. 5,6,7.

† Matthew iv. 1—11. Mark i. 12, 13. Luke iv. 2—13.

‡ Luke xxii. 3. John vi. 70., xiii. 2—27.

to have been spent in casting out and dispossessing devils from the minds and bodies of men;* and in rebuking and threatening them, he proved that he came to destroy the power and works of darkness. His was an avowed and constant war, and the devils knew him as their greatest foe, and the destroyer of their power.† Although the heel, *i.e.* the human nature of Jesus, was bruised in the contest, yet, by his death, (in which Satan for the moment appeared triumphant,) he gave a mortal blow to his power and authority, by delivering the captives of the mighty, and the prey of the terrible one.‡ The cross, designed to display their scorn and abhorrence, is become the praise and glory of all the children of God, to whom, as unto their Lord and Master, the old serpent and his seed continue to manifest the same spirit of enmity and persecution.§ Did devils confess Jesus to be the Son of the most high God, and shall not we acknowledge him to be the seed promised at the

* Matthew iv. 24., viii. 16. 18—23., ix. 32—34., x. 1., xii. 24—28., xv. 22—28., xvi. 23., xvii. 14—19. Mark i. 23—27. 33, 34. 39., iii. 22—27., v. 2—19., vii. 25—30., viii. 33. Luke iv. 36—41., vi. 18., vii. 21., viii. 27—36., ix. 1. 38—42. 49. John xii. 31., Acts x. 38., 1 John, iii. 8.

† Mark iii. 11, 12., v. 6, 7. Luke iv. 33, 34. 41., viii. 28.

‡ Luke xxii. 53. John xiv. 30. § 1 Peter v. 8.

be said to be blessed in them, unless we take the prophecy in its true light, as pointing to Jesus "the promised blessing," whose day of "tabernacling" on earth, Abraham by faith saw afar off, "rejoiced, and was glad."

CHAPTER III.

The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.—Gen. xlix. 10.

THE Holy Ghost, by the mouth of the dying patriarch, Jacob, has pointed to the epoch when he, of whom Moses and the prophets did write, should appear. It is worthy our particular attention, that, at the period of time when Jesus came, Judea was still governed by a Jewish king. It is true the power of the royal Asmonean or Maccabean race was destroyed, and Herod the Great had ascended the throne of Israel, yet the sceptre was not departed from Judah. Herod was an Idumean, which nation had, for nearly two centuries, been proselytes to Judaism, and so incorporated and mingled with the Jews, as to be regarded as one people. Judea bowed to the Roman power, yet Herod exercised the regal

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prophecy,* the exact counterpart of the one we are now considering, in which he declared Jesus to be the promised Shiloh, who should gather together in one, all the children of God which are scattered abroad, not the nations of the Jews only, but the Gentiles also. Yes, Jesus will seek out and bring his people from the mountains whence they are scattered; in the cloudy and dark day he will bring his sons from afar, and his daughters from the ends of the earth, and there shall be one fold under one shepherd, even the glorious Shiloh.

CHAPTER IV.

And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. And in that day, there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious.—Isaiah xi. 1. 10.

THE Jews, from these prophecies, expected the Messiah would spring from the family of David, the son of Jesse; and this led them to preserve, with unusual attention, the genealogy of his descendants. We have abundant testimony that Jesus is of “the

* John xi. 49—52.

house and lineage of David."* By comparing scripture with scripture,† we may venture to affirm, Jesus is the "glorious branch" Jehovah hath made strong for himself. With regard to his human and divine nature, he is both "David's son and David's Lord." He is the "root and offspring of David," and the "bright and morning star." The Gentiles shall come to "his light," and kings to the "brightness of his rising." He is not only a "rod out of the stem of Jesse," but he is the "tree of life" whose "leaves are for the healing of the nations," whose top shall "reach unto heaven," and his branches "cover the earth." He is Jehovah's ensign of mercy displayed to a rebel world, and both the Jewish and Gentile nations are invited to enlist under the banners of the cross. Those who seek an inheritance in the kingdom of the true David, if it be agreeable to the charter of Immanuel's land, shall find his rest to be glorious.

* Since the destruction of Jerusalem, the genealogy of the Jews is lost; the tribe or family of David cannot be distinguished from that of Benjamin.

† Psalm cxxxii. 11. Isaiah ix. 6, 7., lv. 3, 4, 5. Jerem. xxiii. 5, 6., xxxiii. 15. Zech. iii. 8., vi. 12, 13.

CHAPTER V.

Thus saith the Lord, remove the diadem and take off the crown, until he come whose right it is ; and I will give it him.—Ezekiel xxi. 26, 27.

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. Afterwards shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king ; and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days.—Hosea iii. 4, 5.

THE Jews themselves must confess this prophecy to be in part fulfilled. They are wanderers from their beloved Canaan, strangers in a strange land, scattered over all parts of the globe, and destitute of all the local privileges which constitute a nation, although they still retain a distinction of character ; but it only tends to make them a reproach, and their name a by-word amongst all classes. They dwell alone, and are not now reckoned amongst the nations of the earth. The insignia of royal dignity are useless to them, having no king or prince on whom to bestow the crown or diadem. They are deprived of their temple and its services, and of all the glorious distinctions which marked it from those dedicated to false or unknown Gods. The latter clause of this prophecy

shall as assuredly be fulfilled, for heaven and earth shall pass away, sooner than one of the promises of God fail to be accomplished. Yes, the children of Israel shall return, and seek the Lord their God, and him of whom David was only a type, even King Jesus,* who is of David's royal line, "and the government shall be upon his shoulders," for he is the "wonderful counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting father, the prince of peace." Hasten, Lord! we would say, the time "when the deliverer shall arise out of Zion, and turn away ungodliness from Jacob." Assume the sceptre of thy power, Jesus, thou king of Zion, thou "Son of the Highest! for the Lord God has given unto thee the throne of thy father, David; thou shalt reign over the house of Jacob for ever." "Of the increase of thy government and peace there shall be no end; upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this."

* Ezek. xxi. 26, 27.

CHAPTER VI.

The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me ; unto him ye shall hearken.—Deut. xviii. 15—19.

THIS is one of the many precious promises given by God to Israel. Moses is a character justly deserving our regard and veneration. The Jewish nation held him in high estimation, and almost idolized his memory. Perhaps our time may not be misemployed in searching for proofs of the fulfilment of this prophecy, and in examining the character of one (even Jesus) who declares himself to be not only a prophet like unto Moses, but in every respect his superior ; which, if proved, will clearly warrant their giving unto Jesus far greater honour than was even due to Moses. In drawing a comparison between these illustrious personages, we observe ; they both sprang from the family of Jacob or Israel ; Moses, when a child, was, for a time, concealed by his parents from the persecuting Pharoah ; the child Jesus also, was, by command of God the Father, taken into Egypt, to avoid the tyranny of Herod : thus both escaped the destruction executed on all the other male children. Moses was raised up from the midst of the people,

from amongst his brethren the children of Israel; Jesus having taken on him our nature, is not ashamed to call us brethren. Moses was a prophet, called and taught of God; Jesus is the sent, the sealed, the anointed of God, at whose call he came forth. Moses saw God face to face; Jesus lay in the bosom of the Father. Moses wrought miracles by the command and aid of God; Jesus wrought many miracles in the days of his flesh, but all in his own name and by his own power. Moses was an honoured instrument in bringing Israel from the bondage of Egypt; but Jesus delivers his people Israel from worse than Egyptian taskmasters, even the bondage of sin and Satan. Moses fasted forty days before he gave the law to Israel. Jesus fasted forty days before he entered on his public ministry. When Moses wrought miracles in Egypt, the magicians were obliged to confess the divine power by which he acted. Jesus expelled the evil spirits, and they acknowledged his almighty power. Moses commanded the sea to retire, and it obeyed his voice. Jesus said to the tempestuous winds and sea, "Peace, be still!" and instantly there was a great calm. Moses cured one leper.* Jesus cured

* Numbers xii. 15.

many. Moses chose and appointed seventy elders over the people, on whom God bestowed the spirit of prophecy. Jesus chose seventy apostles, whom he endowed with miraculous powers, and sent forth to teach in the villages. Moses chose twelve men, whom he sent to spy out the land the Israelites were about to conquer. Jesus chose twelve apostles, and commanded them to go forth and preach the gospel to all the world, and subject it to his allegiance, by a more glorious power than that of arms. Moses was in danger of being stoned by the rebellious and ungrateful people, whom he had constantly laboured to benefit. The Jews also took up stones to stone Jesus in return for his numerous favours. The relations of Moses were greatly offended with him for marrying an Ethiopian woman.† Jesus has espoused the Gentile church, to the no small displeasure of the Jews. When Moses was the prophet of Israel, they were fed with manna from heaven. Jesus miraculously fed five thousand and seven thousand persons; he could say “I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I

† Numbers xii. 1.

will give for the life of the world." When Moses, by God's command, stretched forth his hand, darkness covered the land of Egypt, which was shortly followed by the awful destruction of its first-born; when Jesus was crucified, darkness covered the land, which, not many years after, was the scene of the most dire calamities. Was Moses a prophet? and did he not speak of the calamities that would befall the Jews? as such, see Jesus teaching the people, and foretelling the time and circumstances of his own decease, and also the siege and destruction of Jerusalem. Was Moses as king in Jeshurun? Jesus is not only king in Zion, but King of kings, and Lord of lords; by him kings rule, and princes decree justice. Moses is described as an almost perfect character; Jesus as wholly free from the least spot or stain of sin. Moses was remarkable for meekness; Jesus, when led as a lamb to the slaughter, opened not his mouth; when reviled, he reviled not again; when persecuted, he blessed. Moses, by command of God, gave laws and statutes, and instituted ordinances in Israel; Jesus instituted the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, and gave laws and commandments to his people. The law given by Moses tends only to condemnation, but Jesus "has brought light and immortality to light by his gospel."

The law of Moses was designed "as a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ;" the doctrine of Jesus is, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." Moses acted as a mediator between God and Israel, at the giving of the covenant on Sinai; Jesus is the great day's-man, and the almighty mediator of the new covenant. Did Moses plead for the rebellious Israelites? we also hear Jesus interceding for transgressors, saying, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Moses read the law in the ears of all Israel; Jesus writes his laws upon the hearts of his people, and his truths in their inward parts. When Moses descended from Mount Sinai, after holding converse with God, his face shone exceeding bright; we are told when Jesus was transfigured on Mount Tabor, his face shone as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. Did Moses choose rather "to suffer affliction with the people of God, than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season?" Jesus preferred suffering misery and woe for a time, rather than his people should endure the everlasting punishment which their sins deserved. Did Moses esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt? Jesus considers the odium affixed to his cross, as a more honourable distinction than the possession of thousands of gold and

silver. Moses, as a servant, was faithful in all his house; Jesus could say "Father, I have finished the work thou hast given me to do," "I have glorified thee on the earth," and "those thou gavest me, I have kept, and none of them is lost." (See John xvii. 12) Moses was permitted, from the heights of Pisgah, to view the goodly land of promise; which was but a type of the heavenly rest Jesus has prepared for those who love him. Moses, as a prophet, was great in Israel; Jesus is the Lord God of the prophets, and unto him shall the people hearken; he will give them the hearing ear and the understanding heart, and make them willing in the day of his power. "Every soul that will not hearken unto this prophet, shall be cut off," for be it known to all people, "that there is none other name under heaven given amongst men, whereby we can be saved," but that of Jesus, who is of a truth "the prophet that was for to come." It was said, by way of reproach, thou art this man's disciple, but we are Moses' disciples. Let us not consider it a disgrace to own our attachment to him, who is in every point of view far superior to Moses, who was but his servant, and the creature of his power. Where shall we find a person who so closely resembles Moses, as Christ? Surely he was the prophet foretold! Yet the Jews

rejected him, and by that rejection prove that Jesus was he of whom Moses wrote—for the Lord has executed the punishment he threatened should befall them, if they refused to hearken unto this prophet; thus the Jews are living monuments of the truth as it is in Jesus. Oh, may we take warning from their calamities, and receive the sent, the sealed, the anointed of the Father, as our prophet, priest, and king; even Jesus the Messiah, the Christ of God!

CHAPTER VII.

The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.—Isaiah xl. 3.

THE Prophets Isaiah and Malachi* were commissioned to inform the church, that when the period should arrive for the coming of the Messiah, a messenger would be sent to announce his near approach. This promise was most strictly fulfilled: Jesus, the Son of the Most High God, did not visit this our world, without first directing an herald to proclaim his coming; even John, who was sent to prepare the

* Mal. iii. 1., iv. 5.

way before him.* This harbinger deserves our attention; he was no ordinary character. An angel, even Gabriel, posted from heaven to speak of his birth, and declare he should be filled with the Holy Ghost from the first dawn of life. If such distinguishing honour was paid to the messenger, how great that due to the master! John demands our respect, on account of the sanctity of his life, the simplicity of his manners, and the active zeal and ardent love he manifested in the cause, and towards the person, of his Lord, and for the integrity and faithfulness exhibited in every part of his conduct towards man. He feared not to reprove sin in whatever class of persons he beheld it, from the common soldier even to the monarch on the throne. To a character so exemplary as John's, the highest respect and veneration are due; and the testimony of such a man deserves not to be lightly regarded. John's birth was six months prior to his Lord's, † and being the first who used water-baptism as a divine ordinance, he was surnamed the Baptist. He abode "in the deserts" of Judea "until the day of his showing unto Israel," and had never seen his Lord

* Matt. iii. 3., xi. 2—15. Mark i. 2—8. Luke i. 5—26.

† Luke i. 39—44.

(who resided at Nazareth, in Galilee), until he came to Jordan for baptism. The testimony he then gave to the person of Jesus merits observation. He publicly acknowledged him to be the person whose way he was sent to prepare, and spoke of him as one whose shoe's latchet he was not worthy to unloose. We see John, when surrounded by his own disciples, point to Jesus, and say "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world," and "this is he of whom I said, after me cometh a man which is preferred before me; for he was before me." John gave the most decided testimony to the Godhead of Jesus, for he said he would "baptise with the Holy Ghost," which is the prerogative only of God. What man can, by any means, redeem his brother, or give to God a ransom for his soul? but John spake of his Lord as "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Yes, he is the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." Under the Mosaic dispensation, the lamb slain, as a morning and evening sacrifice, and on the great day of atonement, was only a type of this Lamb of God's own providing, who offered himself up as a sacrifice for the sins of many. When the disciples of John appeared displeased at the growing popularity of Jesus, their master instantly checked them by

saying " he must increase, but I must decrease ; he that cometh from heaven is above all." After John was cast into prison, we find him sending two of his disciples to Jesus, to inquire if he were the Christ or not.* Having heard the testimony John had before given to the person of Jesus, we cannot suppose he had any doubts in his own mind as to his being the Messiah, but rather that he was fully convinced of the fact himself; and wishing his disciples to be firmly established in the same faith, he, as the most effectual method, sent them to Jesus for satisfactory proofs of a truth which he (John) had been continually teaching through the whole course of his ministry. John was a faithful witness in his master's cause, and to him we are much indebted. But let us not bestow on him the honours due to Jesus, who is deservedly preferred before him ; for, as John justly observed, he was before him. This is strictly true, for although Jesus did not take on him our nature until six months after the birth of John, yet, being God as well as man, his existence is from everlasting to everlasting.

Josephus, in his history of the Jews, speaks of John the Baptist in the highest terms of respect and veneration.

* Luke vii. 18—28.

tion : he says he had acquired such credit and authority amongst the people by the holiness of his life, and his disciples were so numerous, that Herod, dreading a revolt, confined John in the castle of Macharas, and afterwards beheaded him, for no other crime than his honest faithfulness.* Herod's army was soon after totally routed by the troops of Aretas, and the Jews considered it as a mark of Divine vengeance for his cruel treatment of the Holy Baptist.

CHAPTER VIII.

Therefore, the Lord himself shall give you a sign, behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.—Isaiah vii. 14.

THE portion of scripture now before us is highly interesting, and demands serious attention. About seven hundred and eight years before the birth of Jesus, the prophet Isaiah was commissioned to tell the church, a virgin should conceive and bear a son, and should call his name Immanuel. For proofs of the fulfilment of this prophecy, we would refer to Matthew and Luke,† and request their testimony may be read with the

* Matt. xiv. 3—10.

† Matt. i. 18—25. Luke i. 26—38.

serious attention the subject demands. The unblushing infidel may treat it with scorn and ridicule; but let not one bearing the name of Christ, venture to speak with lightness, on this so highly momentous an article of the christian faith. We cannot suppose the Lord, after giving this promise, would be unmindful of its accomplishment: if the birth of Christ had been the result of natural causes, there would have been nothing to excite surprise, nor would it have been a sign, as the Lord himself declared it should be. If he had been born after the manner of the children of men, no doubt he must have partaken of their evil nature. Or if his body had been formed of the dust, as was Adam's, how could the promise given at the fall of man, have been fulfilled? And what relationship would there then have existed between Christ and his church? But now he is "bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh." For in the fulness of time, "God sent forth his son, made of a woman, made under the law, that he might redeem them which are under the law." "Lo! in the volume of the book, it is written of him," "sacrifice and offerings for sin, thou wouldest not; but a body hast thou prepared for him." A body subject to all the infirmities of our nature, yet wholly free from the

sinful principles, and evil propensities of the human race. His name shall be called "Immanuel, which, being interpreted, is, God with us," God in our nature.* Yes, the uncreated word was "made flesh and dwelt amongst us and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." "In him dwelt all the fullness of the God-head bodily." The Socinian may smile with contempt when the Deity of Jesus is attested, but is it not written? "Behold ye despisers, and wonder and perish!" Shall not "he that sitteth upon the circle of the heavens, laugh?—the Lord shall have them in utter derision." We would candidly confess, there are mysteries in this doctrine above the powers of a finite mind fully to comprehend. But are we, for that cause, to refuse our belief of its truth? We should indeed be reduced to a most distressing dilemma, if we were to disbelieve every thing we cannot fully comprehend. Who can discover or fully explain the nature, order, and beautiful economy, displayed in the animate and inanimate creation? They are so many problems unsolvable by man,

* Col. ii. 9. 1 Cor. xv. 47. Rom. ix. 5. 1 Tim. iii. 16. John i. 1, i. 14.

although by the dint of study, many of the causes and effects by which we are encircled, have been traced up to their mighty Author, and eagle-eyed genius has let in a world of wonders to our view ; yet much, very much, both in the heavens, the earth, and mighty deep, remains enwrapt in clouds, or thick darkness. Even in the formation of a blade of grass, there are operations which man cannot define. We enjoy the genial rays of heaven's bright luminary, but who can prove to demonstration, the sources from whence he has derived such a constant supply of matter, as to furnish our system of worlds, with light and heat for nearly six thousand years? In short who can discover or fully explain the mysterious link which unites mind to matter? But surely we do not allow ourselves to disbelieve the reality of their existence, because we cannot enter into the minutæ of their nature. If there was nothing revealed, in the New Testament, of the nature and person of Christ, but what we could fully comprehend, we should then have some cause to refuse our assent to its truth, and might confess it to be a cunningly devised fable. But while great is the mystery of godliness, remember it is God manifest in the flesh; not God putting off his Deity to take the human nature, but it is the second person in

the revealed order of the triune Jehovah, who takes our nature into union with his divine person, and veils his Godhead beneath the human flesh. Thus is God and man united in the person of our glorious Immanuel; and as if no proof should be wanting of his Deity, the angel Gabriel when directing Mary to call his name Jesus, added: "for he shall save his people from their sins." Thus did he give the most decided testimony to his Godhead, for who but God, strictly speaking, can claim a people as his own? and none but God can save them from their sins. In regard to the Virgin Mary, we would cheerfully join in Gabriel's salutation, "Hail! thou highly favoured of the Lord;" but, at the same time, we would beg to observe a nice distinction with reference to Mary, who was only one of Eve's daughters, and, though highly honoured of the Lord in this particular instance, an honour which never was or can be conferred on another; yet Mary's salvation depended on the same foundation as the rest of God's children, and it is plain Mary viewed it in the same light, for we hear her saying, "My soul doth magnify the Lord and my spirit doth rejoice in God my Saviour." Mary was only a creature, and consequently it is sinful to offer her adoration, for it is written "thou shalt worship the Lord

thy God, and none other." As to her having any particular interest at the court of heaven, Jesus has determined that point, by saying, "Woman what have I to do with thee, mine hour is not yet come." It is worthy observation, that whenever Jesus spoke of Mary, he invariably called her "woman," as if at once to silence all who he knew would in after ages bestow improper honours on the virgin. When one said "Behold thy mother and thy brethren stand without desiring to speak with thee," Jesus pointed to his disciples, and said, "behold my mother and my brethren;" and added, "whosoever shall do the will of my father who is in heaven, the same is my mother, and sister, and brother." Whether Mary had, or had not children, after the birth of Jesus, is to us a matter of no importance; all it concerns us is to know she had none before.

CHAPTER IX.

But thou, Bethlehem 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; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.—Micah v. 2.

WE find Boaz (the husband of Ruth) was of Bethlehem, a small city belonging to the tribe of

Judah, situate about five or six miles from Jerusalem, and his posterity continued to possess it for some time, for it was the birth-place of David, the son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, great grandson to Boaz. This was the city from which, according to prophecy, the Messiah should come. If we examine the records left by the Evangelists, we shall find a decree was issued by Augustus Cæsar, to tax all the people of the Jews, and every family was ordered to repair to the cities belonging to their respective tribes. This it was, which brought the Virgin Mary from Nazareth to Bethlehem, she being of the house and lineage of David. It is probable the whole family of David were cited to assemble for the purpose of being taxed; it might be with a design to humble and mortify them, for they had a rightful claim to the throne of Judah. If this had not been the case, it is more than probable Mary, from her situation, would have been permitted to remain at Nazareth. Whatever were the motives of the civil authorities, we have cause to bless our God for thus overruling events, which distinctively considered were oppressive, but now tend to establish the truth as it is in Jesus. What else, humanly speaking, could have brought Mary, a female in the humblest walk of life, to Bethlehem?—If it

were not for this circumstance, we should have wanted this proof of Jesus being the Messiah; for we are told, he should be born at Bethlehem, a city little among the thousands of Judah.* Although a manger was the best accommodation offered for the royal babe, yet his birth was not altogether unnoticed, or passed by, as an event of little importance; for lo! amidst the stillness of the night, an angelic messenger is sent to announce to Jewish shepherds, the arrival of the chief Shepherd. No sooner are the glad tidings of great joy communicated, but a multitude of the heavenly hosts, who had followed with joyful haste, make the air re-echo with sounds, sweet as the music of heaven. While charmed with the delightful melody, and breathless to catch the strain, we distinctly hear, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men." The next object which arrests our attention, is a company of Eastern philosophers, who are come to pay their adorations to the sovereign stranger, and to welcome his arrival. But who could have directed them to this obscure retreat, to find the

* It will be observed the chief priests and scribes, in quoting this passage (see Matt. ii. 6.) have not given it correctly, but have made it bend as much as possible to their ideas of a temporal prince.

infant King? They were led thither, by a star of peculiar motion, appointed to direct these eastern sages (probably Chaldeans), to Israel's King. But how ill did his appearance accord with the dignity of his character; yet notwithstanding the poverty with which he was surrounded, they worshipped him. For he who was a babe at Bethlehem, by the mysterious union of the human nature with the divine person, is the same "whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." We are told that when he went forth in the acts of creation, "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." What wonder then if they tuned their golden harps afresh, when he went forth to accomplish redemption's work, which mystery the angels are represented as desiring to look into. He is also described as a Ruler not only in the armies of heaven, and amongst the inhabitants of earth; but, in a more near and interesting sense, does he reign and rule in the hearts of his redeemed. The symbol of his authority is not an iron rod; no, he rules them with the sceptre of his love. We would say "Gird on thy sword upon thy thigh, O thou most mighty; and go forth, conquering and to conquer; until every land shall own thy power, and all the nations of the earth shall call the Redeemer

blessed." May we imitate these eastern sages, and not feel ashamed to confess our attachment to him, who once appeared as an infant at Bethlehem; for it became him, in taking our nature, to assume it from its earliest state, and in all things to be made like unto his brethren, sin only excepted.

CHAPTER X.

Thus saith the Lord, a voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping; Rahel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not.—Jeremiah xxxi. 15.

It will not be difficult to discover the mourning prophet referred to the murder of the infants of Bethlehem, when it is remembered that Rachel the beloved wife of Jacob, was the mother of Benjamin, which tribe, with that of Judah and the family of Levi, after the revolt of the ten tribes, formed the kingdom of Judah. We are told the wise men came to Jerusalem, to inquire from the Jews themselves, at what place their long promised King should be born; and when told Bethlehem was the the honoured spot, they departed with a charge from Herod, then king of Judah, to return and bring him tidings, that he also might go and worship the infant King. But his hypocrisy was soon discovered.

Under pretence, that the wise men had offered him an insult in not returning to Jerusalem, he issued an order, to destroy all the children in Bethlehem, from two years old and under. An order in every point of view, most cruel, unjust, and cowardly, and which the most hardened wretch must have shuddered to execute. The mind cannot conceive an act of greater barbarity, than the murder of so many innocent babes, in order to be sure of one, even the holy child Jesus. It does not appear that any of their parents had offended the cowardly tyrant, whose heart was harder than the nether mill-stone. What wonder if the voice of lamentation and woe was heard, when the murderer's sword was (to use the prophet's language) made drunk with blood, with the blood of helpless infants, who were torn from the arms of those who would gladly have shed their own blood in the rescue of their babes; but the armed ruffian band, like their master, were insensible to pity, and deaf to the cry of mercy. Well might Rachel, a mother in Israel, have wept, had she witnessed this cruel order executed on the infants of her race! How enviable the lot of those youthful martyrs for the cause of Christ, compared to his, who, though seated on a throne, trembled at the name of Jesus, even when an infant at Bethlehem.

CHAPTER XI.

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given : and the government shall be upon his shoulder : and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.—Isaiah ix. 6, 7.

THESE words, like numerous other passages in the word of God, are far too sublime to be attached to a mere creature ; at the same time, they certainly express ideas which cannot be attributed to Deity. “ Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given,” is language improper to be applied to Godhead, while the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, are titles too Godlike to belong to humanity. In what light are we to view them, if not as descriptive of the person of the God-man, Christ Jesus ? To whom but the Messiah, are we to apply this, and the many expressions of a similar kind, which we find so profusely scattered through the sacred volume ? It is to the wonderful person of the Messiah, God united to the man Christ Jesus, that we direct our thoughts, as the glorious object presented to the faith of the patriarchs and ancient Israel of God. To him give all the prophets witness. All the types prefigure him. All the shadows are designed to represent him, the substance.

He is exhibited to our view in a variety of characters, relations, and offices; and is not God and man, united in one complex person, clearly revealed in this prophecy? Let us apply it to Jesus:—Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given. Behold him! a babe at Bethlehem, subject to all the wants, weakness and helplessness connected with a state of infancy and childhood; such was the holy child Jesus. Unto us a son is given, who is acknowledged to be of David's royal line; yet this son of humanity, is also declared to be the only begotten Son of God, a Son who is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person. But this Son is not given as a Saviour to fallen angels, they are passed by, although possessed of faculties and powers, far superior to the sons of earth; "God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life," Yes, Christ is the gift of God, and the richest, God could bestow; he parted with the choicest jewel in the treasury of heaven; and God has not such another son to give, even if the redemption of ten thousand worlds required it. How amazing the love that could prompt *even* God, to deliver up such a son; a son, in whom he declared himself always well pleased; a son whom all the

angels of God are commanded to worship ; yet he was given up to shame, reproach, and sufferings ; yea, his Father became the chief executioner. " It pleased the Father to bruise him, and put him to shame." Well might the prophet exclaim, " Wonder O heaven and be astonished O earth !" Jesus declared that, as the son of man, all power in heaven and earth was given to him ; and surely the government ought to be on his shoulders, for who so fit to manage all, as he who is the Wonderful Counsellor ; he who, from all eternity, knew the plans and counsels of Jehovah, and with whom he concerted and contrived the creation and redemption of man ; and was it not between the Father and this Son, that the council of peace was settled and established, and is it not " a covenant well ordered in all things* and sure," and does not that part of it published to us in the written word, proclaim it the work of a Wonderful Counsellor ? He indeed is wonderful, both in his person and work : the wonders of his love are here past finding out ; the wonders of his grace are now unsearchable, and it is reserved for an eternity to discover all the mysteries in the Wonderful Person of the God-man, Christ Jesus, which are here incomprehensible.

* Zech. vi, 13

Are we not told that the child born, the son given, is the mighty God? which must surely mean, that the same divine essence dwells in the Father and the Son; that it is one true and essential Godhead, dwelling in the person of the Father, Son, and Spirit; not that they are three Gods, but three distinct persons, constituting one Godhead?—(Does not the body and spirit form one man?) Is not the Son declared equal to the Father as touching his Godhead? Are not their names more descriptive of the relations they sustain in the scheme of Redemption, than indicative of any superiority or inferiority in their essence, or Godhead? Is it not the second person in the glorious Trinity, who has taken the human nature into union with his divine person? And are not God and man united in the complex person of Jesus of Nazareth, Israel's long promised and expected Messiah? His humanity is fully proved by his birth, life, and death; and his Deity is fully attested in the strongest language, for to whom the names, titles, attributes, works and prerogatives of God are ascribed, and declared to belong, surely, He must be the true God; and we have only to search the record of truth, and we shall find ascribed to him, all the distinguishing names and titles of God, as:—

Jehovah, or the Lord,—Isaiah vi. 1. 9, 10. John xii. 37—41. Isaiah xlv. 24, 25. Rom. v. 18. 2 Cor. v. 21. Psalm lxxxiii. 18. Isaiah xlii. 8., xlv. 5, 6. Jeremiah xxiii. 6. 1 Cor. i. 30. Zech. xi. 12, 13. Math. xxvii. 9, 10.

The true God,—John i. 2., xvii. 3. 1 John v. 20, 21.

The Great and Mighty God,—Deut. x. 17. Jer. xxxii. 18, 19. Isaiah ix. 6. Titus ii. 13.

The only God,—Rom. xiv. 9, 10, 11, 12. Deut. iv. 35, 39, Isaiah xlv. 5. 15. 18. 21—25.

The only wise God,—Eph. iii. 25, 26, 27. Jude 24, 25. Rom. xvi. 27. 1 Tim i. 17.

God blessed for ever,—Rom. i. 25. 2 Cor. xi. 31. Rom. ix. 5.

King of Kings, and Lord of Lords,—1 Tim. vi. 14, 15, 16. Rev. xvii. 14., xix. 13, 16. Deut. x. 17.

The Lord of Hosts,—2 Sam. vi. 2., vii. 26. Psalm xxiv. 10. Isaiah i. 24., vi. 3., viii. 13, 14., xlv. 6. Hosea xii. 4, 5. Isaiah viii. 13, 14., xxviii. 16. Psalm cxviii. 22. Matt. xxi. 42, 44. Luke xx. 17, 18. 1 Peter ii. 6, 7, 8. Hosea xii. 4, 5. Isaiah liv. 5. Rom. ix. 33., x. 11.

The First and the Last,—Isaiah xli. 4., xlv. 6., xlviii. 11, 12. Rev. i. 8. 11. 17, 18., ii. 8.

All the attributes of God ascribed to Christ.

- Omniscience,—1 Kings viii. 39. Isaiah xli. 21, 22, 23. Jer. xvii. 9, 10. Matt. xii. 25. John ii. 24, 25., xxi. 17. Rev. ii. 23.
- Omnipresence,—Psalm xxiii. 4., cxxxix. 7—10. Isaiah xli. 10., xliii. 5. Jer. xxiii. 24. Matt. xviii. 20., xxviii. 20. Eph. i. 23.
- Omnipotence,—Gen. xvii. 1., xxxv. 11., xlvi. 3. Phil. iii. 21. Rev. i. 8.
- Eternity,—Psalm xlv. 6., xc. 2. Isaiah xlv. 6. Heb. i. 8., vii. 3. Rev. i. 18., ii. 8.
- Immutability,—Mal. iii. 6. Heb. i. 12., xiii. 8., i. 8.

Divine works ascribed to Christ.

- Creation of the world,—Gen. i. 1. Psalm cii. 25, 26, 27. Isaiah xlv. 24. John i. 1, 2, 3. 10. Col. i. 16, 17. Heb. i. 3. 10., iii. 4.
- Final Judgment of the world,—Psalm 1. 6. Matt. xxv. 31—46. John v. 21, 22. 25. 27. Rom. iii. 6., xiv. 10. 2 Tim. iv. 1. 2 Cor. v. 10.

The Prerogatives of God ascribed to Christ.

- To forgive sin,—Isaiah xliii. 25. Matt. ii. 5. 10. Acts vii. 59, 60. Col. iii. 13.

To Baptise with the Holy Ghost,—Joel ii. 28, 29.
 Neh. ix. 20. Zech. xii. 10. Matt. iii. 11. Acts i.
 5., ii. 33. John vii. 39., xvi. 7. Eph. iv. 8.

*The Kingdom and Honours of God ascribed to
 Christ.*

An everlasting Kingdom—Psalm xxix. 10., xlv. 6,7.
 Heb. i. 8.

An universal Kingdom,—Psalm ciii. 19. John xvii.
 10. Acts x. 36. Rom. x. 12.

Divine Worship,—Deut. vi. 13, 14, 15., x. 20.
 Exod. xxxiv. 14. Psalm xlv. 11. Matt. iv. 10.
 John v. 23., xiv. 1., xx. 28. Acts vii. 59. Rom x.
 13., xiv. 11., xv. 12. Rev. v. 13.

Is not God represented in his word, as highly jealous of his honour, and has he not solemnly declared, that he will not give his glory to another? Then, if Christ is not equal to the Lord of Hosts, whence is it, that the great God does allow, and sanction, his distinguishing names, titles, attributes and works, to be ascribed to Jesus? Can we imagine God to be unmindful of his own honour, or so unkind to his creatures, as to permit those names so descriptive of Deity, to be applied to any mere creature, however superior, or exalted? Has he not pronounced an

awful curse on those who worship any but the true God? Can we suppose the blessed God so inattentive to the happiness of his creatures, as to suffer in his revealed word, language so strikingly calculated to lead men into a belief of the Deity of Jesus, if in fact he was not God? No, the God of Truth does not trifle thus with the children of men. He has set all the great and fundamental doctrines of the gospel in the fore-ground; all truths that are essential to be known in order to salvation, are written as with a sun-beam; the Deity of Jesus, foremost of the whole, is so plain, "that he who runs may read," and the "way-faring man, though a fool, cannot err therein." It does not require superior intellectual powers or attainments, to learn that Jesus is the Christ of God; but it does require art and skill in criticism, to give any other sense to the word of God. There are persons, who deny the Godhead of Jesus, and yet acknowledge him a being of exalted virtue, and a model of perfection, worthy of imitation. But do they not, in robbing him of Deity, destroy all his claim to our attention? in fact do they not make him an impostor and deceiver? Do they not, with the Jews, raise the cry of blasphemy against him? and bring him under the curse and punishment pronounced by the eternal and unchange-

able Jehovah, against every blasphemer? Do we not hear Jesus saying—I and my Father are one, the Father dwelleth in me, and I in him, he that hath seen me, hath seen the Father also? And did he not demand all men, to honour the Son, even as they honour the Father? Did he not declare himself equal to the Father, and did not the Jews so understand him, when they took up stones to stone him, because he being man, made himself equal with God? Yes, Jesus proclaimed his Godhead; he allowed and encouraged religious worship to be paid him; in truth, he claimed all the belief and honours due to Deity. Surely then, if he is not God, he has forfeited all claim to our regard and veneration, and appears as a false prophet and teacher; but the mind shudders at imputing deception there. Blessed Jesus! may I, with Thomas, acknowledge thee, from a full conviction of thy Divinity, to be my Lord and my God. Thou hast declared thyself to be the Son of God with power, by thy resurrection from the dead. Hail! thou Wonderful Counsellor, thou Mighty God, thou Everlasting Father; thou who didst from eternity engage to be the Father and head of thy Church; thou who art the second Adam, the Lord from heaven; thou who watchest over thy Church with more than fatherly

care ; who suppliest all their wants, healest all their diseases, and who, in love, dost “ chasten every son whom thou receivest,” and wilt at the last great day, present thyself with them to the Father, saying, “ Behold I and the children whom thou hast given me.” Yes, thou art the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace; and who so calculated to make peace between God and man, as he in whose person they are both united? He has peace to make between heaven and earth. He can know and satisfy the honour of God, for he is God ; he can feel the wants and sorrows of man, for he is “ bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh.” When he entered our world, was there not a proclamation of peace on earth, and good will to man? Yes, for the Prince of Peace was come, to make peace and reconciliation, by the blood of his cross. He is a successful Peace-maker ; he is, in fact, the only Mediator between God and man ; nor is he yet weary of his office, but ever liveth to make intercession for us. Hail! thou Prince of Peace. Did not this glorious Mediator love to manifest himself in that character to the Church, from the earliest ages of the world? Did he not honour many of the patriarchs and prophets with a display of his person? Was it not the Messiah, who appeared to the Old Testament saints?

Has he not ever been the only visible image of the invisible God? Are we not told that no man hath seen the Father, save the only begotten of the Father, who came down from heaven? Do we not find an opinion generally prevalent amongst the ancient Jews, that no man could see the face of God, and live? Moses, and the assembled multitude at mount Sinai, were of this opinion. Isaiah exclaimed, "Wo is me, I am undone, for I have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." Manoah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Amos, and the other ancient worthies to whom God appeared, were filled with the same awful apprehensions. Is it not more than probable, that God, in the person of the Father, has ever been invisible to the inhabitants of earth? Would not the true majesty, and splendour of Godhead be more than man in his present state could bear? Might not the sight of unclouded Deity destroy a body of flesh? Are not all those passages where the great God is said to appear and converse with his creatures, more applicable to the God-man, Christ Jesus, than to the first person of the sacred Trinity? Is it not more becoming him, who, in after ages, was to take on him a body of flesh and blood, to appear as man, than that God the Father, should do so? Were not the three men who appeared to Abraham in the plains of

Mamre, as he sat at his tent door, in the heat of the day, this Messiah God-man, attended by two angels; and were not the two angels sent forward to destroy Sodom, while the Lord tarried behind to hear the intercession of Abraham, for that devoted city? Was not the same glorious personage the man with whom Jacob wrestled, when he is said to have had power with God and to have prevailed? Was he not *that* Angel of God's presence, who led the children of Israel into Canaan, of whom God said, "beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not, for he will not pardon your transgressions; for my name is in him?" Did he not also appear to Joshua, as Captain of the Lord's hosts? Did he not in vision appear in the same form to Ezekiel and Daniel, as he afterwards did to John, in the Isle of Patmos? And are not all the other passages, of a similar kind, equally applicable to the Christ of God? Can we not enter into the prophet's meaning, and set our seal to the glorious truth, that "unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace!"

CHAPTER XII.

And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.—Daniel ii. 44.

THE book of Daniel contains some very striking prophecies. The chapter from which this is selected, is not amongst the least interesting. The interpretation given by him to the king of Babylon's dream, demands our particular attention. He speaks of four kingdoms, as represented by the image.* The first, or head of gold, is the Chaldean monarchy; which gives way to that figured by the arms of silver, the kingdoms of Media and Persia. This is succeeded by the Grecian, represented by the brass. Then follows the fourth or iron, which is the Roman power, "in the days of whose kings, shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed," &c. &c. We will search for proofs of its accomplishment. Daniel was an Israelitish captive at Babylon, and when he wrote the first part of his prophetical book,

* Dan. ii. 31—45., vii. 1—27.

the kingdom of Chaldea was first in the scale of nations. In earthly pomp and grandeur it surpassed all other states. The land of Judea was then in its possession, and her people, its captives. Its capital, the mighty Babylon, was, from the solidity of its walls, the strength of its fortifications, and its gates of brass, considered impregnable; but, agreeably to scripture prophecy,* the city was taken by Cyrus: he entered it by the channel of the river Euphrates, whose waters he had directed into another course; and during a night of riotous festivity, in which the Babylonians had forgotten to shut their brasen gates, the city was taken by Cyrus, whom the Lord, at least one hundred and seventy years before, named as his servant to destroy the kingdom of Chaldea for their cruel treatment of his captive Israel. Cyrus, the conqueror of Babylon (who issued a proclamation for the Jews to return to their beloved Jerusalem after seventy years captivity) was heir to the throne of Persia; and succeeded to that of Media, by virtue of his marriage with the daughter of Cyaxares (otherwise Darius) his uncle. The kingdoms of Media and Persia thus united under Cyrus (after the overthrow of Babylon) obtained the supremacy

* Isaiah xlv. 1—4.

of the world, and preserved that pre-eminence two hundred and six years, when it was subdued by Alexander, styled the great, whose dissatisfaction amidst the shouts of victory, and the dazzling accompaniments of power, strikingly show the fallacy of seeking true happiness from sublunary objects. Alexander founded the Grecian empire, which continued one hundred and seventy seven years, when it was compelled to submit to Rome's conquering legions, to whom all nations bowed, and, by tribute, acknowledged as their superior. In the days of these kings, did the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: yes, in the reign of Augustus, did the mighty King Jesus first openly declare and set up his great spiritual kingdom. Its beginning, to human appearance, was small and unpromising. Yet, this stone which was cut out without hands, (i. e.) without human power or worldly policy, shall become a great mountain, and fill the whole earth. It is true, the Jewish nation expected the Messiah to come, surrounded by all the splendours of eastern magnificence; that he would deliver them from the Roman power, and, after a reign more glorious than Solomon's, establish a kingdom which should remain unshaken till time shall be no more. But, shall the unchangeable Jehovah alter his purposes or mould his plans, to meet

the idle fancies or short-sighted schemes of the children of men? No, the Messiah has appeared, not in the style they had anticipated, but in the manner most agreeable to the mind of infinite Wisdom. Yet, because he did not assume the gaudy trappings of earthly state, the Jews reject him, and vainly look for another, although he appeared at the time predicted. The Roman power is now laid low, and according to all their prophecies, the period is passed when he, of whom Moses and the prophets did write, should appear. Jesus far exceeds in real excellence, even their own highly coloured portrait, for the blessings of his reign extend to ages yet unborn. They expected a temporal king, but no; the land of Canaan, although the glory of all lands, was far too insignificant for him to accept as the sphere of his government. He shall sway his kingly sceptre, not only over Judea's fruitful land; but his dominions extend from sea to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth. The mightiest monarchies are often swept away, as by the besom of destruction, and all are compelled to submit to the iron hand of time; yet his, is an everlasting kingdom, which cannot be moved by the revolutions of nations, but shall continue firm and unshaken even amidst the crash of worlds. It was expected the

Messiah would deliver them from the Roman power; but mark, it was said, his name *shall* be called Jesus, for he shall *save* his people (not from their temporal oppressor but) from their sins.* Surely it must be confessed, that earth's greatest conqueror, is far below him who delivers from the bondage of sin and satan, which is the worst of slavery. Yes, Jesus saves his people, the true Israel of God, from the consequences and power of sin; from the former, by bearing the punishment himself, and from the latter, by his Spirit implanted in their hearts. The kingdom shall not be left to other people, but he will constantly direct and order all its affairs, and he shall reign and rule for ever.

CHAPTER XIII.

When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.—Hosea xi. 1.

WE cannot entertain a doubt that this verse alludes to the call of the children of Israel from Egypt, yet we are not to suppose it refers exclusively to that event, but we are to behold it pointing to Israel's Lord. Christ is said to be the husband of his Church, and they are both called by the name of Israel;† and this

* Matt. i 21.

† Isaiah xliv. 21., xlix. 3.

verse is only one amongst the many instances which occur in the Old Testament. The patriarch Jacob, or (as he was surnamed by God) Israel, went with his descendants into Egypt, for shelter and sustenance in the days of famine, but they were afterwards cruelly entreated four hundred years; from which state of oppression and bondage, the Lord called and delivered them. In after ages Jesus, God's beloved son, our Israel, was taken into Egypt, to avoid the persecution of Herod; and when that tyrant was dead, God called the holy child Jesus from that land of heathens, by the ministration of an angel. In Egypt, Israel was first formed into a church; and thither did the great head of the Church also go; and the Holy Ghost, by the evangelist Matthew, has stated, that it was on purpose to fulfil this prediction. That Jesus was as much the beloved of the Father, when tabernacling here below, as when he lay in the Father's bosom, cannot be doubted;* indeed, all the honours of his mediatorial kingdom, are the fruits of his humiliation and suffering. We hear him saying, "for this cause doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again."

* Matt. iii., 17. xvii. 5. Mark i. 11., ix. 7.

CHAPTER XIV.

Her Nazarites were purer than snow, they were whiter than milk, they were more ruddy in body than rubies, their polishing was of sapphire: Their visage is blacker than a coal; they are not known in the streets: their skin cleaveth to their bones; it is withered, it is become like a stick.—Lamentations iv. 7, 8.

IN the Old Testament we find a description of the order of the Nazarites and their laws; we discover a Nazarite to be one set apart or separated for the Lord, either for a given time, as in the case of a vow, or for life, as Sampson, who was a Nazarite from his birth.* The order was one of Israel's glories; for the Lord when enumerating some of the many honours conferred by him on the nation, adds; "and I raised up of your young men to be Nazarites." They were all so many types, pointing to the one great Nazarite, even Jesus; whom it will not be difficult to recognise, under this description. Jesus is the true Nazarite unto God, in the eternal council of peace; he was set apart to accomplish the Lord's great work of redemption.† Of him it can truly be said, he is purer than snow,

* Numbers vi. 2, 3. 13. 18—21. Judges xiii. 5 7., xvi. 17.

† Hebrews ix. 14. 2 Tim. i. 9.

and whiter than milk: he, and he alone, is free from the least spot or stain of sin: being "holy, harmless, undefiled, and *separate* from sinners. The Church describes her Lord, "as white and ruddy;" as the "altogether lovely and the chiefest among ten thousand." Yet when tabernacling here below "his visage was so marred more than any man's," and his "form more than the sons of men:" when seen in our streets he had "no form, comeliness, nor beauty, that those who saw him should desire him." This lamentation of the prophet was called forth, by the state of misery and wretchedness, to which the Chaldeans had reduced the nation; yet it had a peculiar reference to him, who in after ages was known by the name of Jesus of Nazareth. No doubt his having resided in a town of that name, was *one* cause of his having so universally obtained the appellation. We find it used by the band of armed men when they came to apprehend him, and by the maid-servant in the hall; Pilate affixed it to the cross; the devils used it. It was also used by blind Bartimeus; by the apostles, both before, and after their Lord's resurrection; by the angels at the tomb, and by Jesus himself. And by the power of the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, was one lame from his birth made to leap, arise, and

walk.* We are told the word is derived from Natzar, which signifies a branch; and is not Jesus described as the man whose name is "the Branch?" yes, he is the branch out of Jesse's root, whom the Lord has made strong for himself.

CHAPTER XV.

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek: he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn.—Isaiah lxi. 1, 2, 3.

THIS is one of the many descriptions we meet with of the Messiah, who is represented as being especially anointed to his office.† We cannot be at a loss for a satisfactory proof of the fulfilment of this prophecy,

* The first who appears to have called our Lord, Jesus of Nazareth, was the Devil in the person of the poor maniac, and is it not probable that Satan influenced the minds of men to give him that distinction with a view to deceive them as to the place of his birth; which was not at Nazareth, but at Bethlehem?

† Psalm xlv. 7.

in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. He did not come forth unsent or unanointed. When he publicly entered on the great work of his mission, he was anointed to the office by the visible outpouring of the Spirit. We are told, that immediately after his baptism in the waters of Jordan, the heavens were opened, and the Spirit of God, as a dove, descended and lighted upon him; and a voice was heard from heaven, saying, "this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Thus we hear the Father bearing testimony to the person of the Son, and we see the Holy Spirit descending and resting on Jesus. Thus, did the three persons of the glorious Trinity, at one time, distinctly manifest themselves, and that at the entrance of Jesus on his great work. It may be proper to observe that, as God, he needed not the anointing of the Spirit, for in him dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. It was the human nature of the God-man, Christ Jesus, that was anointed to the great office of mediator, which work he had before, by covenant, engaged to perform. To him, the Spirit was not given in a limited measure; he is the "Wonderful Counsellor;" in "him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." It would be a recapitulation of a great part of the New Testament, to shew the exact method

in which this prophecy was fulfilled. When the disciples of John came to Jesus, to inquire if he really was the Messiah, he, as one confirmation of the fact, told them that to the poor he preached the gospel. Yes, we find Jesus, when on earth, spending a great part of the three years and a half of his public ministry in journeying to the towns and villages, publishing the "glad tidings of great joy," of which angels were once the honoured messengers, namely, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men." The common people, we are told, heard him gladly. Jesus can, with much propriety and justice, proclaim "liberty to the captive, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;" he can say, with authority, "deliver him from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom." Jesus is also King in Zion, whose mourners he will never fail to comfort; they can celebrate their Lord's mercies in the language of the Church of old, "Sing, O heavens, and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains; for the Lord hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted." We cannot find an instance on record of any persons who in their trouble fled to Jesus when on earth, but whatever was the nature of their distress, he always removed it. We also hear him proclaim-

ing the "acceptable year of the Lord," saying, Come now; even to-day, if ye will hear my voice; "now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." While he proclaims "the year of his redeemed," he does not neglect to publish "the day of vengeance of our God." Though he delight in words of mercy and of comfort, he does not shun to declare the whole counsel of God. As a faithful monitor, we repeatedly hear him urging sinners to flee from the wrath to come, and solemnly warning them of the fearful punishment awaiting those, who reject the counsel of God against their own souls.* Nor did he fail to speak in the strongest language of the miseries which will be the portion of those, in another world, who, in this, reject and disobey him. When Jesus read aloud this prophecy in the Jewish synagogue, and declared it was that day fulfilled; we are told "all the people bear him witness, and wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth." Every one who reads the history of Jesus with a candid mind, must be constrained to acknowledge that through every part of his active and eventful life, his conduct manifested, that the "Spirit of the Lord rested upon him;" that

* Hebrews x. 28.

his was "the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and of might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord."

CHAPTER XVI.

For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.—Psalm xci. 11, 12.

THE psalm from which this is taken, describes, in glowing language, the blessed state of those who have God for their refuge; but we are not to limit the entire application of these verses to the sons of men. We find they have a reference to the God-Man, Christ Jesus. At his first entrance on the great work of his mission, he was for forty days and nights tempted by Satan, during which time the devil made use of every artifice to tempt and destroy him. Amongst other schemes, he set Jesus on a pinnacle of the temple, and desired him to prove his Godhead, by casting himself down from the height; for he said, it was written that the angels of God had charge concerning him, and in their hands they were to bear him up, lest at any time he dash his foot against a stone. Jesus gave other proof of his Deity than Satan desired:

he told him he should not tempt the Lord his God, and he also added "Get thee hence Satan, for it is written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." It is an undeniable fact that when Jesus was on earth, the devils knew his person and publicly acknowledged his Godhead. Yes, angels and devils own his power; and shall the sons of earth whom he formed from the dust, be the last to confess a truth which is acknowledged by all in heaven and hell—by the wisest and best created intelligences, and by the fallen angels, who were expelled the heavenly mansions, and consigned to the lake of fire and brimstone, for rebelling against the authority of the great Mediator between God and man,* who was, in after ages, known by the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

CHAPTER XVII.

And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts; and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of Hosts.—Haggai ii. 7, 9.

HAGGAI prophesied at that period of the Church's

* Daniel xii. 1. Revelations xiii. 7.

history, when, after the return from the Babylonish captivity, the Jews built the second temple: on which occasion, we are told the young men shouted for joy; but the old men wept, * for they had seen the glory of the former house, in comparison with which, the second was nothing. But the Lord commissioned Haggai to inform them, for their comfort, that the glory of the latter house should be greater than of the former. It appears by the descriptions given us of the temple built by Solomon, that it surpassed in grandeur and magnificence all other buildings, which in any age have appeared to astonish and delight the world. It has never been equalled, either as it respects the grandeur of the design, or the richness of its internal decorations; a great part was overlaid with pure gold. But these were not the most glorious distinctions of the former house. It contained the Ark, with the mercy seat and cherubim; † the Urim and Thummim, ‡ the spirit of prophecy, § the holy fire, || and the Shechinah, or Divine Presence. ¶ The Jews themselves must confess that the second temple was destitute of these five signs, which so eminently dis-

* Ezra iii. 12.

† Exod. xxv. 19. 20. 21.

‡ Exod. xxviii. 30. Deut. xxxiii. 8. § 2 Kings xix. 14—37.

|| 2 Chron. vii. 1. 3.

¶ 2 Chron. vii. 2.

tinguished the first house. We hear nothing of them after the Babylonish captivity. Well might the old men weep, for Ichabod (the glory is departed) might with much propriety, have been written on the walls of their newly erected temple. It was afterwards considerably injured during the wars, but was repaired and beautified by Herod ; yet none, when speaking of the splendour of the temple, can allow it to bear any comparison with the one built by Solomon : yet the Lord hath said, “ the glory of the latter house should be greater than of the former ; ” and God is not unmindful of his promises, nor has he ever neglected to fulfil them. We will therefore endeavour to discover if this has not been accomplished. We observe, that the Lord would first “ shake all nations ; and the desire of all nations should come ; ” and then “ would he fill the house with glory.” This promise was made shortly after the return of the Jews from Babylon ; which kingdom had been shaken to its centre, as were also in succession the kingdoms of Persia and Greece. The thrones and power of their kings had been subverted, the nations almost annihilated ; and Rome was the mistress of the world, when Jesus, the “ desire of all nations,” appeared. Perhaps it may be said, that few nations had even heard of the promised

Messiah, and still fewer desired his coming. But do not the guilty sigh for pardon, the captives for liberty, the oppressed for a deliverer? does not the debtor need a surety; the weary and heavy laden rest; the diseased a physician; the young a guide; the aged a support; the distressed a comforter; the hungry food; the thirsty water; the ignorant an instructor; and the wanderer shelter? That these things are desired by all people and nations, none can deny; but it is in Christ alone we can find a supply for all our spiritual wants, and a remedy for these, and a long list of unmentioned ills. In Jesus there is a fulness to supply all our need. He has pardon for the guilty, "liberty for the captive;" he is the "surety" of the debtor, and the "physician" of the sin-sick soul; he will be a guide to youth, and "even to hoar hairs he will be with them;" he is the "water of life," and the "bread that cometh down from heaven;" his "flesh is meat indeed," and his "blood drink indeed:" he will teach the ignorant wisdom, and "deliver the oppressed;" he calls to him the "weary and heavy laden," promising to "give them rest;" he bids the mourner be of good comfort, for he will give "the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness;" and truly he is the refuge of the destitute.

In short, it is only in him, and from him, we can find supplies for all our spiritual wants; with him is "life," "light," "liberty," and "joy." Surely if all nations did but know him, all nations would love him too; for he is justly described by the Church as "the altogether lovely, and the chiefest amongst ten thousand." The fulfilment of the latter clause of the prophecy, was literally accomplished when Jesus (the second person in the revealed order of the Trinity), in our nature, entered the temple. Surely that must be acknowledged a far more glorious distinction, than the ten thousands of gold and silver which ornamented the former house. Yea, it was a greater honour to have the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, personally teaching in the temple, than the five signs which constituted the greatest glory of the former house. They were only intended to exhibit to our view a God in Christ. The temple and its contents were but figures of the things signified, even the Messiah. The second temple was honoured not with types, but the person; not with the shadows of the good things to come, but the substance, even Jesus, the Son of the most High. At twelve years of age, Jesus was found in the temple, in the midst of the Doctors of the Law, both hearing and asking them questions. Often, in the days of his

flesh, did he visit the temple, and from within its walls, did he instruct the people, and declare his divine mission. To those who deny that Jesus was the Messiah, this promise must for ever remain unfulfilled; for the second temple never did, either in its buildings, or decorations, surpass, or even equal the glory of the former. It is now seventeen hundred years since the second temple was destroyed, and all its stones laid level with the dust. Thus are they reduced to the alternative of representing God as failing to fulfil his promises; a sentiment, it might be supposed, any man would shudder to advance, and much less maintain. To those who receive "the truth as it is in Jesus," there appears a beautiful harmony between the promise, and the accomplishment; they can exclaim, truly did "the glory of the latter house exceed that of the former," for it was honoured with the personal presence of Jesus, the "Christ of God," "the Lord of life and glory," "the prince of peace." Of whom, it may be justly observed, that he is the only source from which true and lasting peace can be expected without the fear of a disappointment; and this "peace is made through the blood of his cross."

CHAPTER XVIII.

And the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in : behold, he shall come saith the Lord of Hosts.—Mal. iii. 1.

THE coming of the Messiah was anticipated with much impatience and pleasure by the Jewish nation, and particularly about the time Augustus Cæsar was Emperor of Rome, in whose reign, it will be remembered, Jesus was born. The period according to Daniel's Prophecy being arrived, the attention of all classes of the people was so excited by his expected advent, that when John came, "all men mused in their hearts, if he were the Christ or not." But he disclaimed all pretensions to being the Messiah, and pointed to Jesus as the illustrious person, whose coming had been so long foretold. We find many instances recorded, which prove the Jews to have been on the look out for their long promised deliverer. Aged "Simeon waited for the consolation of Israel:" it had been revealed to him, by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had "seen the Lord's Christ:" when the child Jesus was brought into the temple, the aged prophet took him up in his arms, and exclaimed, with holy joy, "Lord, now let thy servant depart in peace,

for mine eyes have seen thy salvation &c., &c." Anna the prophetess, also, "spake of him to all that looked for redemption in Israel." Frequently during the life of Jesus do we hear the people exclaim,—surely this is "the prophet that was for to come." We find the Priests and Levites, persons, it must be supposed, best acquainted with the writings of the Old Testament, requesting Jesus to tell them plainly, if "he were the Christ or not." The Lord whom they "sought, suddenly came to his temple;" yet when "he came to his own" nation, "they received him not," for their minds were darkened by their false notions of a temporal king. This prophecy loudly proclaims the Godhead of Jesus, for to ascribe a temple to any but God is idolatry; a sin most strictly forbidden throughout every part of the word of God. Jesus is also the Messenger of the covenant. He publicly proclaimed the nature of the covenant ratified in the Court of Heaven, between the persons of the glorious Trinity, even the covenant of redemption, which is "well ordered in all things and sure," and was concluded ere the hills were made, or the mountains brought forth; when this "earth was without form, and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep."*

* Prov. viii. 22—31.

CHAPTER XIX.

Nevertheless, the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun, and the land of Naphtali, and afterward did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations. The people that walked in darkness, have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.—Isaiah ix. 1. 2.

FROM the days of Malachi, the last of the prophets, until the coming of John the Baptist, a period of four hundred and thirty-six years, the Church was in a state of great darkness and apparent desertion. This prophecy was fulfilled when Jesus resided, or personally preached in the towns of Galilee; then, “the land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; the people which sat in darkness saw a great light; and of them which sat in the region and shadow of death light sprung up.” Jesus is “the true light, that lighteneth every man that cometh into the world.” He is given to be “a light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of his people Israel.” To whom we would say, “Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.” For through the tender mercy of our God, Jesus, the day-spring from on high, hath visited

us, to give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, and to guide our feet in the way of peace. "Light and immortality are brought to light by the gospel" of Jesus, who is himself the divine fountain, or source from whence must emanate all spiritual light. He is the light and the life of man; he came a light into this world, that whosoever believeth in him should not abide in "darkness."

CHAPTER XX.

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.—Zechariah ix. 9.

WE have so striking an accomplishment of this prophecy, that it is scarcely possible to imagine one can be found, who is unwilling to point to Jesus and exclaim, Zion behold your King.

Was it ever known that any other king, except Jesus, made such an humble entry into the city of Jerusalem, or indeed any city. No, his was altogether the reverse of such processions. Here was no herald to proclaim his approach, no charger highly caparisoned to convey the Monarch, no royal purple or

glittering attire to distinguish him from the throng, or dazzle the unthinking crowds. In himself and attendants, all was, to outward appearance, mean and contemptible. Yet the minds of this vast multitude, were for the moment so struck with the truth of his Messiah-ship, that with one simultaneous shout, they make the air resound with Hosannas to the Son of David; "blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest." This is not the only instance of their wishing to make him their king.* His disciples were impressed with the common error, that he would establish a temporal kingdom. After his resurrection we hear them saying, "Lord wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" But no, his kingdom is not of this world, else would his servants have been called on to fight for it. The weapons of their warfare, are "not carnal but spiritual, and mighty, through God, to pulling down the strong holds of sin and satan." We do not hear that Jesus made one visit to the court of monarchy, but many to the temple. The Roman authorities viewed him with a jealous eye, and passed sentence on him for avouching his kingly authority. It is worthy of remark, that

* John vi. 15.

the superscription affixed to his cross, instead of declaring him an usurper, did, in four languages, proclaim his innocence, and acknowledge his authority—"Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews." Yes, the meek and lowly Jesus—Jehovah has set as king upon his holy hill of Zion; he is "King of Kings, and Lord of Lords." He is just, for "behold a King shall reign in righteousness." He not only has salvation, but he is Jehovah's salvation, to the ends of the earth. To him "every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess," that "he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." It was a striking display of his Godhead, in directing his disciples where to find the colt, and in overruling the mind of the owner, to let the animal go only on their saying, "the Lord hath need of him." Yes, he is the Lord of the whole earth; "the beasts of the forests are his, and so are the cattle on a thousand hills."

CHAPTER XXI.

Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, even I have seen it, saith the Lord.—Jeremiah vii: 11.

AN attentive reader of the New Testament, will easily discover the correspondence between these

quiet submission to the command of the God-man Christ Jesus ; when he said, “ take these things hence, and make not my Father’s house, an house of merchandise;” it is written, “ my house, shall be called the house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves.” Not only his acts, but his words, proclaim his Deity. Jesus can with propriety call God, Father, for he is his first begotten, well beloved Son, and, as such, he has rule over his Father’s house.* The disciples who were observers of the event, struck at the display of his Godhead, applied to him the words of the psalmist ; “ The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up, and the reproaches of them that reproached thee, are fallen upon me.” If we except the miracle recorded by John, of the armed men falling to the ground on the reply of Jesus, this certainly is one of the greatest miracles he performed in the days of his flesh.

CHAPTER XXII.

Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength, because of thine enemies ; that thou mightest still the enemy and avenger.—Psalm viii. 2.

THE manner in which this prophecy was fulfilled is

* John v. 22, 23.

very interesting. When Jesus drove out the buyers and sellers from the temple, we are told the children shouted hosannas to the Son of David. The Chief Priests and Scribes were filled with indignation to hear even children confess a truth they wished buried in eternal silence; and, coming to Jesus, they said, dost thou not hear what these say? But he mildly answered, "Yea, have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?" It is more than probable that amongst the persons he had just expelled from the temple, were the parents of some of these children; it would not therefore have excited our astonishment so much, to have found them mocking and reviling the man of Nazareth, as it does to hear them shouting hosannas to the Son of David. There were none of those gay distinctions in the person of Jesus, which so usually please and delight children; all was as to outward appearance mean and unattractive; yet their youthful hearts were filled with love and admiration for the person of the Man, so generally treated with contempt; and they as with one voice shout the praises of this Son of David. Ought it not for ever to have put to silence the Priests and Scribes, and all those bitter enemies of Jesus, when he gave such clear proofs of his being the Messiah, that

even these Jewish children, could discover him to be the very person their parents, from the first dawn of reason, had taught them to expect, as the long promised deliverer of Israel, who should spring from David's royal line.

CHAPTER XXIII.

I have preached righteousness in the great congregation ; I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, thou knowest.—Psalm xl. 9.

It is said, to the immortal honour of Noah, that he was a preacher of righteousness to the Old World:* but as the glory of the latter dispensation far exceeds that of the former, † so is its founder greatly distinguished from all the prophets and teachers under the Jewish economy. We find Jesus actively engaged in preaching his own gospel, whenever opportunity offered, free from the trammels of form, and the circumscribed rules of human order. We see him in the temple, and the field ; in the synagogue, and on a mountain ; in the crowded street, and the wilderness ;

* 2 Peter ii. 5.

† Heb. xii. 18—24.

in the house, and by the sea shore : at one time to the crowded throng, and then to the little troop of disciples ; now to learned rabbies and rulers, and then to a few fishermen of Galilee ; but in every place and company he was a preacher of righteousness. He did not refrain his lips from fear of man. He did not hesitate to publish doctrines necessary to be known, because they were of a kind likely to be ungraciously received. He shunned not to proclaim the whole truth ; whether men would hear, or whether they would forbear. Again, look at him as a preacher of righteousness. All he taught was pure and undefiled as the light of heaven. He did not flatter one vice, or countenance one folly. He described sin as hateful to God, whether in the priest or people, the ruler or the ruled. He taught the Jews, who rested in the mere letter of the law, that it is of a spiritual nature, " extending not only to the outward actions," but to the " thoughts and intents of the heart." He inculcated obedience, not on the narrow principle of self love, or to gain the praise of man ; but he insisted, that it can only be acceptable to God when springing from a principle of love to God and man. He did not instruct his hearers to keep a fair exterior only, but he went at once to the seat of iniquity, the human heart ; and

declared that the fountain must be first cleansed before the streams can be made pure. Again, we behold him as a preacher of righteousness, declaring that "except our righteousness exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees, we cannot enter the kingdom of heaven." He taught that we must be clothed with a better righteousness than our tattered rags, ere we can be allowed to sit down at the "marriage supper of the Lamb," where all the guests are arrayed in "fine linen, clean and white," which fine linen is the "righteousness of the saints." This wedding garment is provided by the Lord of the feast, and is the spotless robe of Jesus's perfect and complete righteousness.

CHAPTER XXIV.

I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old.—Psalm lxxviii. 2.

WE hear Balaam, the son of Beor, from the heights of Moab, attended by an idolatrous king and prince, taking up his parable on the multitudes of Israel. We also find many of the prophets of the Lord in the different ages of the Church, presenting their Master's message in the dress of parable. The sweet singer

of Israel is here said to open his mouth in a parable, and utter dark sayings, which have been kept secret since the foundation of the world. But we are compelled to pass by this son of Jesse, to direct our attention to one who may not unaptly be styled 'the man of parables.' Jesus so frequently used them in his discourse to the multitude, that it is said "that without a parable spake he not unto them;" and who can read his parables without exclaiming, "surely never man spake like this man." His discourses are adorned with the striking force and luxuriant imagery of the East. He made use of the most beautiful language and elegant ideas, to impress on the mind a knowledge of things which are not seen and spiritual, by similies drawn from things which are seen and temporal. Who can read the affecting representation of the pity and forgiveness God manifests towards the ungrateful, rebellious, but afterwards penitent sinner, so forcibly displayed in the parable of the Prodigal Son, without being charmed at the happy simplicity that pervades the whole. Unlike the production of men, the words of Jesus, like the works of creation, display new beauties on every attentive examination. They lose nothing by a minute inspection—they are not mere empty words :

at every perusal they are increasingly attractive, and we discover that the most sublime truths are taught, where, perhaps, at the first reading, we beheld nothing particularly instructive or engaging.

CHAPTER XXV.

He shall feed his flock like a shepherd : he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.—Isaiah xl. 11.

THE Messiah is here, and in several other parts of the old Testament, held forth to our view under the character of a shepherd. He is called, “Jehovah’s shepherd,” and to his care is committed the safeguard of God’s flock. He is described as “seeking out and delivering his sheep from all places where they have been scattered, in the cloudy and dark day.” He is said to “seek that which was lost,” and to “bring again that which was driven away;” “to bind up that which was broken; to strengthen that which was sick; to gather the lambs with his arms, and carry them in his bosom;” “to make them lie down in green pastures, and lead them forth beside the still waters;” in short, to him are attributed all the kind offices of a “good shepherd.” It will not be difficult

to recognise Jesus under this description. On examining the New Testament, we find in it an exact counterpart of this character. We hear Jesus describe himself as "the true shepherd," who "calleth his sheep by name, and leadeth them out, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice; but a stranger will they not follow, for they know not the voice of strangers;" "he knoweth his sheep, and is known of them, and they go in and out, and find pasture." His watchfulness and power are such, that he will not suffer any, either by surprise or force, to pluck them out of his hands;* nor will he forsake them in the hour of danger; "he fleeth not, because he is not an hireling;" and he will eventually collect both the Gentile and Jewish flocks together, that there may "be one fold,† under one shepherd." Nor shall one of the least of the flock be missing; all "his sheep must pass again under the hands of him that telleth them;" even the "good shepherd who has laid down his life for the sheep;" and now liveth to watch over, defend, guide, and supply the wants of his flock, from whom he will withhold no "manner of thing that is good."

* John x. 28, 29.

† John x. 16.

Certain it is, this "Chief Shepherd" will punish* the unfaithful hirelings "who feed themselves, but not their flocks;" "who have not strengthened the diseased, healed the sick, neither have bound up that which was broken, neither brought again that which was driven away, nor sought that which was lost; but with force and cruelty have ruled them." Therefore, O ye shepherds! hear the word of the Lord; thus saith the Lord God, "Behold I am against the shepherds, and will require my flock at their hands, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall they feed themselves any more."

CHAPTER XXVI.

And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears.—Isaiah xi. 3.

THE deceptions practised by the human race are many and various. With no other clue to discover the real character of individuals than their professions and conduct, men are often led to form the most unjust opinions; and frequent and lamentable are the

* Ezek. xxxiv. 10.

mistakes that arise. Falsehood often lurks beneath the warmest professions; the guise of friendship is made to conceal the perfidious spirit, the mask of sincerity is worn by the consummate deceiver, and man becomes the dread and fear of man. Who can look at Jesus, without being struck at the nice discrimination of character he discovered in his opinions of the men by whom he was surrounded. He could espy in Nathaniel "an Israelite in whom there was no guile." He discovered that the ardent zeal and warmth of Peter's attachment would induce him boldly to suffer death in his Master's cause, although the denial of that Master loudly proclaimed him a faithless coward. He could point out the perfidious Judas, fostered by the eleven disciples as a bosom friend. He could detect the hypocrisy and deceit that lay hid beneath the fair profession of the Scribes and Pharisees; he knew their public conduct was not in unison with the hidden man of the heart. He was not blinded by the semblance of virtue; nothing false passed with him for genuine; he instantly discovered the counterfeit, however well executed. Nor did the sterling pass by unknown to him, though its exterior was defaced and unattractive. He could look into the inmost recesses of the human

heart, and discover there the seat of iniquity, he could behold the monster in his den, however ingeniously its exterior was adorned by art, and bring to light the hidden things of darkness. In his opinions there was no error; in his censures, no unjust severity—he always judged righteous judgment; “for he judged not after the sight of his eyes, neither reprovèd after the hearing of his ears.” With righteousness did he “judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth; righteousness was the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins;” and why? “Because my thoughts are not as your thoughts, neither are my ways as your ways, saith the Lord of Hosts.”

CHAPTER XXVII.

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.—Isaiah xxxv. 5.

Is it not highly proper, that those who profess to be intrusted with offices of authority, should be able to exhibit the credentials of their appointment, in order to be accredited? The prophet Isaiah was commissioned to proclaim many of the marks by which the

Messiah should be distinguished. Amongst other signs "the eyes of the blind were to be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped." Jesus of Nazareth not only declared himself to be that long-promised Messiah, but constantly exhibited, in the most public and open manner, the credentials of his high official character, and confirmed his claim to our belief by his numerous miracles. Could we inquire of Bartimeus, who, of old, sat by Israel's way-side begging, who was the skilful oculist that restored to his long sightless eyeballs the power of vision; joyfully would he point to Jesus the Son of David, as the gracious benefactor whose almighty word had again caused him to behold the gladsome light of day. Might we hold converse with him who had never beheld the cheerful face of man, whose eyes had rolled in gloom and darkness, deprived of the sight of nature's beautiful works; no doubt he would, with the same undaunted courage he displayed before the Jewish Pharisees, declare that Jesus of Nazareth had opened the eyes of one born blind. Nor were these the only recipients of his Divine bounty. By his almighty voice the deaf were made to hear: the 'ephphatha' of Jesus could "clear the obstructed paths of sound, and bid new music charm the unfolded ear," for it was

the voice of one whose biddings were enablings. When the disciples of John came to inquire of Jesus if he were the illustrious personage so long promised, or if they were to look for another, we are told, "in the same hour Jesus cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits, and unto many that were blind he gave sight," and requested the disciples of John "to return, and tell the things which they had seen and heard;" how that "the blind saw, the lame walked, the lepers were cleansed, the deaf heard, the dead were raised, and to the poor the gospel was preached." To one so well instructed, as we may presume John to have been in the writings of the Old Testament, he could not wish for more satisfactory evidence to prove that Jesus was the Messiah. John bore witness unto the truth, but Jesus "had greater witness than that of John, the works which the Father had given him to finish, the same works which he did, bore witness of him that the Father had sent him."

That Jesus wrought miracles his enemies could not deny; but how absurd they should attribute them to satanic influence. The Devil is not wont to be a benefactor to our race; we should not expect to find him lending his power to destroy his own kingdom, or to benefit the children of men. The miracles of Jesus

were not an useless display of power, wrought to gratify idle curiosity, or for sordid or ambitious motives; they were all designed to promote some honourable or useful purpose, and were of the most benevolent character, not unworthy the incarnate Deity whose pity for his creatures is commensurate with his power. His miracles were numerous and diversified; they were wrought openly, and proclaimed publicly; not confined to one place: Jesus went about healing all manner of sickness and disease among the people. The disciples were not the only witnesses to these extraordinary events. Jesus was surrounded by great multitudes when he healed the leper. Jairus's daughter was raised to life in the presence of her friends and the mourners. The Pharisees beheld the devil cast out of the dumb man—the whole congregation in the synagogue witnessed the instantaneous cure of the withered hand—four thousand, and five thousand men not only beheld the miraculous increase of twelve loaves and a few small fishes, but their bodies were refreshed by the plentiful repast. All the people of Gennesaret sent to collect the diseased, so convinced were they of the wondrous cures effected by a touch of the hem of his garment. When in Galilee, great multitudes came unto Jesus, bringing the lame, blind, dumb, and maimed, and he

healed them all. When the poor father's lunatic son was cured, multitudes witnessed the fact. Jesus was surrounded by crowds when he gave sight to the two blind men. The Chief Priest and Scribes saw the wonderful things he did in the temple—driving out the merchants, and healing the lame and blind. In the synagogue he cast out an unclean spirit. When the widow of Nain's son was raised from the dead, much people of the city were with her. The lawyers and Pharisees watched Jesus when he cured the man of the dropsy. Many Jews were present when he called Lazarus from the grave. Jesus was surrounded by his persecutors when he healed the ear of Malchus. The enemies of Jesus witnessed his miracles; they possessed every opportunity that incredulity itself could desire, of examining the several objects on whom he had displayed his omnipotent power: this circumstance, together with the diversity of time and place, precluded all possibility of deception. Peter boldly declared to the "men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem," that "Jesus of Nazareth was a man approved of God among them, by miracles and wonders and signs which God did by him, in the midst of them, as they themselves also knew." The intrepid disciple feared no contradiction, it was a fact too

clearly established for any of that age to deny ; and what madness is it for any in a later period to cavil against a truth they possess not a single fact to disprove. The more minutely the New Testament of our Lord Jesus Christ is examined, the clearer do its marks of divine authenticity appear. The exalted character of the Man of Nazareth requires only to be known to ensure admiration. Who, that attentively considers the sketch given of that model of all perfection, can imagine the history of the Evangelist to be only a cunningly devised fable ? The schools of philosophy, with all their boasted learning and virtue, could not conceive any thing half so refined, or so far exalted above the most elevated of the human race. From whence, then, did the beloved physician, the tax-gatherer, and the two fishermen, obtain that beautiful model of holiness, presented to us in their writings ? They must have copied from life—they must have witnessed the living character—those unlearned Jews could not have invented so correct a likeness of incarnate Deity. Even if they had taken the united virtues of the most eminent saints in the Old Testament for their pattern, it would not bear a comparison with the artless grandeur and majestic simplicity discoverable in this history of the life of

Jesus of Nazareth ; which, it should be remembered, was written at a time when the religion of the Jews was little more than superstition ; for the law of God was made void by the absurd tradition of the fathers.* Yet no trait of false Judaism is discoverable in the character of Christ. In short, the history of the four evangelists is the very reverse of what might reasonably be expected from ignorant men, who had strongly imbibed their nation's bigotry and superstition. The gospels carry their own evidence, and prove the men who wrote them not only had the example of Jesus for their guide, but that they were divinely inspired.† They have mixed up none of their own corrupt notions or false ideas, but presented us with a book which is not unfitting the God of Truth to acknowledge as his own.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing : for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.—Isaiah xxxv. 6.

BLESSED Jesus, we behold thee surrounded by the diseased and wretched. We see thee attend that

* Mark vii. 9. 13.

† 2 Tim. iii. 16.

seat of misery, the pool of Bethesda, whose cloisters oft resounded the plaintive voice of sorrow; for within its porches were assembled many of the sons and daughters of affliction. Amidst the group was one, who, for thirty-eight long years, had sighed over his poor enfeebled limbs, and who oft had heard the joyful sound of Bethesda's agitated waters. But, alas! this Angel of Mercy brought no healing balm for his diseased limbs. Oft had he seen a companion in misery hastily rush into the troubled pool; and beheld their diseased bodies healed by one plunge into those sacred waters. Yet his slow, though anxious steps, never reached its brink, until some happier object had possessed its healing properties. His case attracted the kind attention of Jesus, to whom, when questioned, he tells his tale of wo. But hark! a voice is heard, "Arise, take up thy bed, and walk." The astonished cripple no longer needs the friendly crutch, but treads with ease and joy his gladsome path. Yes, beneath the porches of Bethesda's pool, the Godhead of Jesus darts forth its clear and splendid rays. Well might the fame of this wondrous Physician spread, and multitudes of the afflicted press to share his favours. Behold, amidst the numbers who throng his door, a poor paralytic cripple, borne by four. Every

effort to force a passage through the dense crowd is fruitless. Faith does not easily relinquish its subject, and the roof is even bared to admit this subject of misery into the immediate presence of the Healer of diseases. Nor were their efforts unsuccessful. One word from him does more than the united skill of all earth's physicians; and he, who, a few moments before, required a couch to support his palsied frame, is now seen forcing his passage through the astonished multitude, triumphantly carrying his own bed. Surely "it was never so seen before," even "in Israel," that land so famed for miracles. Jesus not only wrought miracles himself, but when he sent forth his disciples to preach the everlasting Gospel, he gave them authority to work miracles, in order to prove their commission to be from Heaven. We behold these fishermen of Galilee, in the name* of their divine Lord and Master, Jesus of Nazareth, healing all manner of sicknesses, diseases, and infirmities; testifying both to the friends and enemies of the crucified Jesus, that God was with them, indeed and of a truth, so mightily did the word of the Lord prosper. The blessings of the Messiah's reign are frequently exhi-

* Acts iii. 6.

bited to our view under the simile of water. Jehovah promises, "when the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them; but will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys." He will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. Rivers of water in a thirsty wild, are not more acceptable to the fainting traveller, than the salvation of Jesus is welcome to the convinced sinner; to such who believe he is precious. The conditions of obtaining it are inscribed by the finger of God; we behold them written in legible characters: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." Ezekiel, in vision, beheld this holy water issuing from the temple of God. Its sovereign efficacy was such, that whithersoever it flowed, healing and life attended its course. John in the Apocalypse, describes it as the "pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb;" its banks adorned with continual fruitfulness, and never-fading verdure. The salvation of Jesus is also described as a "fountain which is opened

to the house of David, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and uncleanness." May *we* know its purifying and refreshing qualities: may *we* drink deep of the living waters, which are "a well of water springing up unto everlasting life." Jesus himself personally invites "all that are athirst, to come unto him and drink."

This fountain of life, is not of recent discovery; the antedeluvian world beheld it as a small rivulet, which continued to increase as it flowed down the patriarchal age, widened under the Mosaic dispensation, and became broader and clearer, as it warbled along the prophetic course, and now displays itself as the grand and majestic fountain of living waters, whose streams make glad the city of our God.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.—Psalm xl. 7, 8.

THE psalm from which these words are selected, was written by David, king of Israel, but never can they with justice be applied to him. We dare not

venture to imagine he acted agreeably to the will of his God, in the matter of Uriah the Hittite; nor was the law of his God ruling in his heart, when his pride led him to number the children of Israel. But let us no longer dwell on the crimes and failings of this (in one sense of the word) great man; let us endeavour to discover some other, to whom it can, with more justice, be applied. But, alas! if we search to earth's remotest bounds, we cannot find, on this our globe, one to whom it may be applied without deserving the charge of flattery. If permitted to extend our search to the upper and brighter world, and allowed to inquire of the inhabitants of those realms of bliss, if they had ever known one of Adam's race, when sojourning here below, of whom it could with truth be said, his delight was to do the will of his God, yea that the law of his God was the constant ruling principle of his heart;* struck at our want of discernment, they would exclaim with holy indignation, was He so long an inhabitant of your world, and do ye not know him? Have ye not read of his life, of his acts, of his words, and ways; but above all, have ye not heard the oft told tale of

* Psalm xiv. 1. Eccles. vii. 20. Rom. iii. 12.

his death? Do ye now need to be reminded that the words are a true description of the man ye call Jesus of Nazareth? Yes, angels know him, and glory in their knowledge; with joy would they tell us, that, with all their opportunities of observing his conduct, they could never discover in him the least imperfection or tendency to sin.* Yes, it is Jesus the son of David, and not David the son of Jesse; who is here speaking, as other parts of the psalm clearly prove. He alone could say, without presumption, "I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea thy law is within my heart." Jesus came from heaven to earth, to do the will of his Father who sent him; even to accomplish the work of redemption, which is as much the will and pleasure of the Father, as it is the delight of the Son. His zeal was discoverable at twelve years of age, when he was found in the temple, and, to the gentle reproof of Mary, answered, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business;" which he preferred before the refreshments of the body; yea, his meat was to do the will of him that sent him, and to finish the work. What devotedness marked his life! days of toil in travelling and preaching were

* John xiv. 30.

often succeeded by whole nights spent in prayer: the returning sun found him again employed with the same unwearied diligence in the work he had undertaken. We should do well to bear in mind, that all Jesus did was voluntary. There was nothing, but his love to God and man, which led him to engage in the work. There was no compulsion, no obligation, it was entirely an act of his own free will; nor did he enter on the covenant, ignorant of the difficulties and sufferings connected with the work. He was well acquainted with their nature, and extent; he had counted the cost and weighed the price; and with a clear view of the immense load of sufferings before him, did he, with cheerful promptitude, go forth to the work. We cannot have a more striking exhibition of his zeal, than in the reply he made to Peter; Jesus had been warning his disciples of the circumstances of the death which awaited him; but Peter could not bear the idea of his beloved Master's exposing himself to so much suffering, and in the warmth of his attachment, he exclaimed, "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee:" But Jesus said unto Peter, "Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be

of men." Is this the language of the man, who, when he was reviled, reviled not again, and when persecuted, he blessed? Can this be the answer of the meek and lowly Jesus to a beloved follower, who only spoke with an intention to prevent his Lord from suffering? Yes, it is; but Peter was little aware of the momentous consequences connected with that death. The advice he gave would, if followed, have been a more dire calamity than the world had ever known, yea, even worse than the ruin brought upon our race, when our first parents followed the counsel of that false reasoner Satan. Jesus, well aware of the immense benefits resulting from his expiatory death,* would not allow even a beloved disciple to use one argument against his voluntary sufferings. How different the conduct of Jesus, when Peter denied him! there was no reproof, no upbraidings; but all was love and pity for the weeping servant, to whom, after his resurrection, he gave many kind tokens of his forgiveness. We are told, when the time approached that Jesus should be offered up, he steadfastly set his face to go up to Jerusalem, well known as the destined place of his sorrows. We

* John xiv. 5.

hear him saying, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished." When Judas was about to betray him, Jesus said, "what thou doest do quickly." His delight to do the will of his God, was most conspicuous when the band of armed men came to apprehend him, in the garden. He did not attempt to flee, or endeavour to conceal himself from their pursuit. He did not shrink from the danger even when so near; for it is said, Jesus knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth to meet them; and said, "whom seek ye," and when told Jesus of Nazareth, he said, "I am *he*." There was no evasion, no reluctance, but he cheerfully and freely delivered himself into their hands, and met with promptitude the adversaries he had to encounter. When Peter, indignant at the insults offered his Master, and anxious for his rescue, drew his sword in the garden, and wounded the High Priest's servant, Jesus mildly reproved him, adding, "the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" Jesus could have commanded twelve legions of angels to his rescue, yet he allowed himself to be bound, scourged, and crucified as a malefactor. Not all the powers of earth and hell combined, could have destroyed the

body of Jesus, had he not given himself up a voluntary sacrifice.* He had power to lay down his life, but no man had power to take it from him. The human nature of Jesus, when united to his divine person, became in a manner omnipotent: unless he had freely consented, he could not have been made the subject of their cruelty, but for that "cause came he into this world." The active and passive obedience of Jesus has reflected more honour upon God, than the unsinning obedience of men and angels could have done to all eternity. The free and voluntary nature of that obedience adds a beauty and lustre to the whole. "Then said I, lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me." Moses wrote of Christ: the whole of the Old Testament (if we except some of the prophetic parts which relate to the then kingdoms of the earth,) have a reference to the person, work, or church of Christ. The ceremonies, institutions, and many of the characters, of the Old Testament, are shadows, types, and figures of Jesus the Messiah. Even the preceptive parts are not exempt. The great apostle of the Gentiles speaking of the law, says it is a "schoolmaster, to bring us to

* John x. 18.

Christ." When from comparing our heart and conduct by the perfect standard of God's law, we discover our short comings, the law thus becomes a teacher, and shows us the necessity of an interest in the salvation of Jesus. He could truly say, "I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart: How I love thy law, it is my meditation all the day;" in fact, the law, which is holy, just, and true, is merely a transcript of his divine mind.

CHAPTER XXX.

I am become a stranger unto my brethren, and an alien unto my mother's children.—Psalm lxi. 8.

AN, my Lord, I know this to be thy voice of lamentation, at the unfeeling conduct of those, from whom thou oughtest to have received the kindest attentions. Thou wast as "a stranger unto thy brethren, and as an alien unto thy mother's children;" "for even thy brethren, and the house of thy father, even they dealt treacherously with thee." They cried "depart hence, and go into Judea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest, for there is

no man that doest any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, show thyself to the world." "For neither did his brethren believe in him." No sooner did he show himself unto the world, and multitudes thronged to behold his miracles, but they cry, thou art beside thyself. From his chosen friends, the disciples, he also experienced much unkindness and ingratitude. During his unparalleled agony in the Garden, instead of endeavouring to mitigate, and sooth his sorrows, they slept, as if careless of his woes. He marked their conduct, and exclaimed, "What! could ye not watch with me one hour?" In the time of danger, "all the disciples forsook him and fled." When in Pilate's hall, and surrounded by men who thirsted for his blood, Peter, with oaths and curses, thrice denied his Lord and Master, who heard, and cast a look of reproof, mingled with love, towards his faithless disciple. Blessed Jesus, how few of the tender charities of life were exercised towards thee, though thy heart, cast in nature's purest mould, was not insensible to the kindlier feelings of that nature. Jesus particularly testified his affection towards John, that beloved disciple, who laid in his bosom. He also discovered the tenderness of his regard towards the three

highly favoured subjects of his friendship at Bethany. The sight of the sorrowing sisters at the tomb of their only and dearly beloved brother, his friend Lazarus, excited the tenderest sympathies of his soul, and drew tears from the eyes, and groans from the heart of Jesus. "Behold how he loved him," exclaimed the by-standers. Let us not think it beneath the dignity of the eternal Son of God, to have shared in the sorrows of such a scene; rather let us rejoice, that we have an High Priest, "who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and that in all our afflictions he was afflicted." Was not this event recorded to encourage us to present all our cares and trials before him. The cry, "Lord, he whom thou lovest is sick;" will not, cannot, be unnoticed by him who wept at the grave of Lazarus; for, though he has changed his place, he has not changed his nature. As Man, he can still sympathise with his people in all their sorrows and afflictions. As God, he is ever able to extend his all-powerful arm, and give the wished-for aid.

CHAPTER XXXI.

They also that seek after my life lay snares for me ; and they that seek my hurt speak mischievous things, and imagine deceits all the day long.—Psalm xxxviii. 12.

WHERE shall we find the person to whom these words are so applicable, as to Jesus. From the manger to the cross, he was constantly encircled by men who were plotting his destruction. If we trace the line from Herod, the Tetrarch of Galilee, to Pilate, the Governor of Judea, we find that the enemies of Jesus were neither few nor weak. We see marshalled against him, kings, priests, and governors ; Pharisees, Scribes, and Sadducees ; the learned and the wealthy ; the noble and the peasant ; the Jewish nation and the Roman soldiery. No scheme that malice, iniquity, or falsehood could devise or suggest, was suffered to escape ; all were pressed into their service, and made to bear against him. Every stratagem was resorted to, that they might entangle him in his discourse, to form an excuse for seizing his person. At one time, the Herodians are sent with the question, “ Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, or not ? ” and though they preface their inquiry with “ Master, we know that thou art true, and carest for

no man, for thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth," yet he discovered their hypocrisy ; and who but must admire the God-like wisdom that sparkles in his bold reply ? We next behold the Pharisees approach with cautious step and flattering tongue, to ask his opinion of the laws enacted by Moses for divorcement. On the other side, the Sadducees appear to present their queries touching the resurrection of the dead. However artfully their plans were laid, they could not surprise or deceive Infinite Wisdom. Their next scheme is to present before him a woman guilty of adultery, hoping, from the known kindness of his character, that he would pronounce her pardon, and then they could accuse him as a violator of the commands of their great lawgiver, Moses, who ordered all persons guilty of such offences to be stoned to death ; but he, who knew what was in man, could foil his adversaries, whilst he pardoned the trembling penitent. " Let him that is without sin, first cast a stone at her," sent home to their conscience, proved the wisdom and Almighty power of him with whom they were contending. Yet still his enemies spake against him, and they that laid wait for his soul, took counsel together.

CHAPTER XXXII.

For I have heard the slander of many ; fear was on every side ; while they took counsel together against me, they devised to take away my life.—Psalm xxxi. 13.

It is not infrequent that the envious and the profligate are found speaking in terms of reproach of characters whose public and domestic conduct are a beautiful portrait of all that is honourable, amiable, and truly worthy of commendation. Yet persons will never be wanting who can truly appreciate and highly esteem the fair edifice of moral excellence, and bestow the just tribute of respect it deserves. It is possible for men to be so far deceived by personal prejudice, or swayed by the false opinions of others, that they not only view with indifference, but even treat with contempt and scorn, persons, to whom the Searcher of hearts will one day say, “ Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.” Examples of these facts are not wanting, but we nowhere behold so striking an illustration of this truth as in the reception the Holy Jesus met with from the men amongst whom he tabernacled. It must be confessed, that in the most perfect of the human race there are defects and blemishes, to which even the

eye of friendship cannot be blind, yet in Jesus there was a freedom from all evil either in principle or practice. He could be weighed "in the balance of the sanctuary," and not found wanting either to God or man. His actions, when measured by the just standard of God's law, are pronounced perfect. Yet he, who was purity itself, was not exempt from slander, but was called a gluttonous man, and a wine bibber; a friend of publicans and sinners, an hypocrite, a man of sedition and strife, a Sabbath breaker, and a violator of all the laws of Moses. In scorn, they say, this fellow, and that deceiver, thou art a Samaritan; a race of men held by the Jews in the most sovereign contempt and hatred. By some, he is accused of disloyal and traitorous conduct toward the rulers of Jewry; others pronounced him guilty of blasphemy; and, to crown the whole, they declare him to be a devil; yea, Belzebub, the chief of devils. Blessed Jesus, thou didst, indeed, hear the slander of many. Every action was viewed through a false medium. Thy acts of mercy became an occasion of offence, and called forth the hatred of these self-deceived men, and thy whole conduct was vilified and spoken of in the harshest terms of disapprobation and scorn. Yet those ancient slanderers and perse-

cutors of Jesus, were not without their fears. At one time, lest, from his growing popularity, the Romans should take away their place and nation; at another time, the purity of his doctrine becomes the source of disquietude. They all secretly dreaded his power. Fear was on every side, while they took counsel and devised to take away the life of Jesus. Pilate's wife could not forbear expressing her fears; and Pilate himself illy concealed the perturbation of his troubled conscience. How insufficient was water to cleanse the polluted hands of that wretched governor, so deeply stained with the blood of an innocent victim, sacrificed to his tame compliance; and, to seal his awful doom, he soon after impiously dared imbrue his hands in his own blood, and rush uncalled into the presence of his offended Judge. How tremendous the situation of Pilate when standing before the Judge of all the earth, even *that* Jesus, he had unjustly condemned and crucified. How different the scene from that when Jesus appeared as the despised Nazarene in Pilate's hall. The mind shudders at contemplating the awful fate of those who dare to lift their puny arms in rebellion against Zion's King, and the language of whose hearts till death is, "we will not have this man to reign over us."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the days of his fierce anger.—Lamentation i. 12.

THESE words are in some degree applicable to the mournful prophet Jeremiah, but it will do no violence to consider them as referring to Jesus, and to him they apply with tenfold force. Let us not pass him by unnoticed, but let us “behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto his sorrow,” who, by way of distinction, is called “the Man of Sorrows.” We see Jesus, attended by three of his disciples, enter the garden of Gethsemane; we behold him withdraw from them about a stone’s-throw, and, kneeling down, pour out his soul in prayer to God. Let us draw nigh to witness the scene, but let us approach with awe and reverence, for methinks we are about to tread on hallowed ground. Let the frame of our minds be solemn and attentive, whilst we view a scene so mysterious and sublime. We observe Jesus on his knees, begin to be sore amazed and very heavy: yea, his soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; and in the bitterness of his spirit, we hear him cry out, “Fa-

ther, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done." Being in an agony, he prays the more earnestly. Thrice we hear him present the same petition. His agony becomes so extreme, that he sweats great drops of blood, and so profusely, that it even falls upon the ground. Struck at a sight so mysterious and solemn, we turn towards the disciples for an explanation; but lo, they are fallen into a deep sleep, although requested by their Master to watch and pray. Desirous to ascertain the cause, we survey the wondrous scene, but find no external marks of punishment. True, the sufferings of the cross he viewed as near, but they were not yet commenced; nor can we discover any one afflicting him. The only visible object we perceive is, an angel from heaven; but his was an errand of love, for he strengthened him. It is therefore quite clear, that it was from sorrow of soul, and not pains of body, Jesus then suffered. We eagerly inquire what powers could have had such influence over him, as to occasion so great anguish of spirit? We are told, the powers of heaven and hell; * and we immediately request to be informed, why the holy, harmless, and undefiled

* Luke xxii. 53.

Jesus, is thus the object of God's displeasure, and the sport of Satan. We are directed to consult the records of truth for an explanation of the scene. We examine, and find that Jesus had voluntarily come forth, and offered himself as the surety of his people, having placed himself in their room, and the curses of the law taken hold upon him, his soul endured all the horrors of the tremendous load of our guilt imputed to him. Would you behold the awful consequences of sin; then go, visit Gethsemane, and see Jesus prostrate in the garden. Mark the extreme anguish of his spirit. What language is sufficiently strong to express the agonies of his soul in that awful hour, when the conflict of his mind forced through all the pores of his sacred body a bloody sweat; not merely a drop or two, but so copiously as to fall upon the ground, and that in the open air, in a night of such extreme cold, that, in the crowded hall of the High Priest's palace, the servants found it necessary to make a fire to warm themselves. We may well tremble and stand amazed at a sight so awful and mysterious as the soul-agonies of the God-Man Christ Jesus. "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto his sorrow, which was done unto him, wherewith the Lord

afflicted him in the day of his fierce anger." Yes, the hand of Jehovah was in it, he then stood up to punish the sins of his people, in the person of their surety. It was also the hour and power of darkness, and Satan then poured forth all his malice, and exerted all his fury, to worry and destroy this Lamb of God ; although Jesus declared, the prince of this world had nothing in him, (*i. e.*) no corrupt principles or evil passions as materials on which to work ; yet was the soul of Jesus assaulted by all the malicious artifices of hell. It is more than probable, that the great adversary overpowered the three disciples with drowsiness, and caused them to fall into a deep sleep, in order to keep every source of creature-comfort from Jesus during this season of conflict and sorrow. In the garden of Eden, did Satan gain his first triumph over apostate man ; but in Gethsemane's garden, did Jesus, as the representative and surety of man, give that decisive overthrow to the power of sin and Satan, which shook to its centre the throne of that arch-fiend.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.—
Psalm xli. 9.

And I said unto them, if ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price, thirty pieces of silver. And the Lord said unto me, cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prized at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the House of the Lord.—Zechariah xi. 12, 13.

SURELY every one acquainted with the history of Jesus, as connected with that of Judas, must acknowledge these remarkable verses to be prophetic of the traitorous conduct of that betrayer of Christ. They describe the base deeds of one of his followers. It was his own familiar friend, which did eat of his bread, that lifted up his heel against him. It was not an open enemy that did him this dishonour; it was one with whom, for near three years and a half, he had daily intercourse; during which period he had constant opportunities of witnessing the miracles of Jesus. He heard his divine discourses, he saw him display his power, and, in common with the other disciples, did he receive the kindest treatment from his Master, to whose person Judas publicly professed himself faithfully

attached: yea, "he was numbered with the apostles, and obtained a part in their ministry;" but such was his hypocrisy, that the disciples were not conscious of his real character. To his care they intrusted the slender stock of money—Judas kept the bag. Though under the mask of friendship he artfully concealed his perfidious spirit from the eye of man, yet he could not deceive his Lord and Master. Jesus well knew, amongst the twelve whom he had chosen to be his apostles, one was a devil.* He knew this serpent, fostered in his bosom, would betray him. Yet we behold the meek and lowly Jesus condescending to wash those feet which were so shortly to run on an errand of the basest ingratitude. Judas was unmoved by this act of unparalleled humility; no kindness could soften his heart, by sin made hard as adamant; for it appears he instantly arose, and, though night (a time best suited for such deeds of darkness), went to the Chief Priests, and said unto them, if ye think good, give me my price; so they weighed him thirty pieces of silver. For that paltry sum did this perfidious monster sell his Lord and Master, and engage to

* John vi. 70.

deliver him into the hands of his bitterest enemies; and then, to conceal his base and treacherous conduct, he mingled with his Master's family, and even dared to partake with them, not only of the paschal feast, but of the Lord's Supper, which was instituted immediately after the celebration of the feast of the passover. So callous was the wretch to every feeling of remorse and pity, that he could, unmoved and unrelentingly, even receive from the hands of the innocent victim of his treachery, the symbols of the Lord's bruised body, and blood-shedding. When Jesus mildly declared that one of them would betray him, the faithful disciples, filled with astonishment and grief at the bare intimation of such an act of perfidy, each eagerly exclaimed, "Lord, is it I? is it I?" The hardened Judas could join in the cry, and with all the effrontery of a child of satan, appeal for a confirmation of his innocence; but Jesus knew his treachery, though hid beneath the garb of friendship. Alas, wretched Judas! how little didst thou enjoy thy ill-gotten wealth! Thou hadst scarcely grasped the price of blood, ere thou didst cast it from thee; before even the victim of thy treachery was crucified, thou didst cut short thy race on earth, and madly rush on the thick bosses of Jehovah's buckler; thou didst

terminate thy wretched course of sin here, to enter on thine awful state of everlasting wo. Matthew the Evangelist informs us that Judas hung himself, but in the Acts of the Apostles we read, that he fell headlong, and all his bowels gushed out. These seeming contradictions are easily reconciled, if we suppose, which is not improbable, that he fell from the place whence he hung himself; and thus a double mark of infamy was affixed to his body. What a remarkable fulfilment of prophecy, in the purchase of Acedama, that potter's field of blood. Indeed, these verses of Zechariah look more like the descriptions of a contemporary, than the predictions of one who lived at least five hundred and eighty years before the events narrated actually took place.

By the Mosaic law, if a servant was goaded by an ox, the owner of the ox was to pay the master of that servant thirty pieces of silver: * and for that trifling sum it was the blessed Jesus was basely sold; he, whose price is far above rubies, and to whom all the good things thou canst desire are not to be compared. But, while we detest the treachery of Judas, let us be careful that we do not commit the like act. Let us

* Exodus xxi. 34.

not salute Jesus with the kiss of profession, while we are secretly in league with his worst enemy, sin : which, of old, nailed Jesus to the cross. No wounds are considered by him so severe, as those wherewith he is wounded in the house of his friends.*

CHAPTER XXXV.

When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell.—Psalm xxvii. 2.

THE Psalm from which this verse is selected, was written by David king of Israel, when under the teachings of the Holy Spirit. David unquestionably proved himself a mighty man of valour; and by the help of his God did he overcome troops of foes; indeed, as a warrior, he is surpassed by none. But still these words are not strictly applicable to David; though he slew many by the sword; yet we never hear that any of his unwounded enemies fell before him: and we find but one solitary instance on record, of a body of armed men falling to the ground, only on a single word spoken by their adversary. The instance

* Psalm lv. 12.

to which we allude, was an event which occurred in the garden of Gethsemane, when a company of men went to apprehend Jesus. We find a band of Roman soldiers, armed as for war, (sent by the Chief Priest,) attended by their officers, and a large concourse of persons, who were also provided with weapons, lanterns, and torches, that they might secure Jesus, whom we see coming forth to meet them, unarmed, and accompanied only by the disciples. With all the dignity of conscious innocence, we hear him inquiring whom they seek; when told, Jesus of Nazareth, he mildly answered, *I am*;* but instead of instantly seizing their prey, they go backwards, and fall prostrate on the ground. Is this the conduct of Roman warriors? What was it which so soon relaxed the nerves, and damped the bravery of a soldiery, famed for their discipline and valour? It was not threats nor menaces; it was not promises nor bribes; nor was it the sight of a company more numerous than themselves. It was none of those causes which usually paralyze the exertions of soldiers. Surely then there was an almighty power accompanying the word spoken, for we

* *I am*. The reader will observe the word *He* is written in italics, to denote that it was not in the original, but added by the translators.

find all this dismay and consternation was occasioned only at the simple word of Jesus. Then was that prophecy of Isaiah accomplished, who, when speaking of the Branch out of Jesse's Root, said, "He should smite the earth with the Rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips should he slay the wicked." Truly they had cause for dismay; for they were contending with none other than the glorious personage, the Great I AM, who appeared to Moses at the bush; and the same power which smote them to the earth, could, if he had pleased, deprive them of life. Surely this must be acknowledged to be one of the greatest miracles performed by Jesus in the days of his flesh, as it was produced by apparently the slightest exertion of his power.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed.—Psalm ii. 1, 2.

THE whole of this Psalm is descriptive of the Messiah, and we are not destitute of strong proofs to warrant our applying it to Jesus. We find persons of

different denominations and rank in society, even kings, priests, scribes and pharisees, Jews and Gentiles, in league to persecute and destroy an innocent individual. Of the Jews we see Caiaphas the High Priest, at the head of the Sanhedrim, from day to day in consultation on the best and most effectual methods to secure and destroy the victim of their displeasure. Of the Gentile party are Herod and Pilate, deputy kings or governors under Cæsar, assisted by the Roman soldiers, seconding and consenting to the plans of the Jewish rulers and people. We see these men forget their national and personal animosities, to join in the scheme. Yea Herod and Pilate, although at enmity before, on this occasion lay aside their resentments, become friends, and act in unison. But why “do these heathens rage, and against whom do these kings of the earth set themselves,” and wherefore all this consultation and contrivance? Is it to secure a powerful tyrant, the scourge of an oppressed nation? Is it to subdue an usurper who has arisen to trample on and overthrow the existing authorities of the state; or is it to bring to justice a wretch who has violated her laws, and by his crimes and enormities become the dread and fear of his race? No—but it is against the meek and lowly Jesus, who had never refused to pay

tribute to whom tribute was due, who had never attempted to establish a kingdom amongst the princes of the earth; but when solicited to do so, had ever checked the proposition, as his kingdom was not of this world; he could challenge his bitterest enemies to prove against him any violation of the laws, either of Moses or Cæsar; nor did Jesus attempt to escape from them, but was daily to be found either in the temple, or about the city or its suburbs, attended by a handful of unarmed followers. There is one circumstance which deserves particular attention, as it tends to show the extreme warmth and rage of his persecutors. The night Jesus was apprehended, was the very night the Jews celebrated the passover: after which ordinance, the whole of the people were forbidden to go abroad, or leave their houses until the morning.* But so eager were these infuriated people to accomplish their plans, that in opposition to this Jewish command, they go out to seize Jesus, whom they take to the palace of the High Priest, where the scribes and the elders of the people also assemble, to contrive measures to get Jesus crucified. It appears more than probable that they sat in council the whole

* Exodus xii. 22.

night, as we leave them late in the evening thus employed, and very early in the morning we find them still engaged on the same subject. So soon as it is day, they lead Jesus to the hall of Pilate. "But why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? Against whom do the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together?" How sad their mistake, if they imagined they were only planning the destruction of a poor Jewish carpenter's son, when, in fact, their schemes were against the Lord, and against his anointed. It was not from any lack of evidence, that they denied Jesus to be the Christ of God. The language he used on another occasion, is strictly applicable to them, and to all those who do not acknowledge Jesus as the God Messiah. "Many good works have I showed you from the Father; for which of those works do you stone me? if I do not the works of my Father, believe me not; but if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works, that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him." The plea of ignorance when the means of better information are in our power, will only increase our condemnation. We may all peruse the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make us wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus, for

“ all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”

CHAPTER XXXVII.

False witnesses did rise up : they laid to my charge things that I knew not.—Psalm xxxv. 11.

WHERE shall we find one more unjustly accused, than Jesus. They falsely declare him to be a blasphemer and seducer of the people. His enemies, in order to give an appearance of justice to their proceedings, (for they were determined to destroy him) proceeded to call witnesses against him ; a mock trial ensues before Caiaphas the High Priest ; but, though the witnesses are perjured, their testimony agrees not together. They indeed *accuse* him of having threatened to destroy their temple and build it again in three days ; but they can *prove* nothing. It is true, that Jesus, when speaking of his death and resurrection, said, destroy *this* temple, and after three days I will raise it up again. But this he spake of his

body, of which their temple was a type.* It was the honoured spot, in which the Lord met with and blessed his people, and the body of Jesus was honoured as the dwelling place or temple of the Lord of Glory. God did indeed dwell in an house of clay which, agreeably to his own prediction, was laid low, even to the ground, and, after three days, he raised it up again, without human aid or art. These words are made the subject of their accusation; but, the charge is so childish and ridiculous, that it deserves to be treated with contempt. It is a little extraordinary, that they did not bring against him the prophecy he had delivered of the utter ruin which, before that generation should have passed away, he had declared the Romans would bring upon their devoted city and temple. But they cautiously refrain from speaking on that subject, and proceed to accuse him of blasphemy, but here again they can prove nothing. Caiaphas artfully enough, adjures the condemned, by the living God, to tell him plainly, if he were the Christ, the Son of God. To which question Jesus replies, by boldly declaring his Godhead, and saying, that hereafter they should see him coming in the clouds of Heaven, as

* John ii, 19—21. † Col. ii. 9.

their Judge. The High Priest then rent his mantle, and they pronounced him worthy of death. By the law of Moses, persons guilty of blasphemy, were to be stoned to death. The Jews being a conquered people, had not the power to inflict so severe a punishment; they, therefore, take Jesus before the Roman Governor, and vehemently accuse him of perverting the nation, forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, saying, that, he himself was Christ a King, and that he stirred up the people, beginning from Galilee to Jerusalem. But how false and unjust the accusation. Cæsar, throughout his vast dominions, had not a more honourable or obedient subject, nor one who by example or precept, better taught the true interest of the king and nation. He, indeed, preached from Galilee to Jerusalem, but not with words of sedition and strife, for he stirred up the people to practise such a refined and exalted system of ethics, that those of the far-famed heathen moralists sink into insignificance and contempt, when their sentiments are compared with the doctrines of morality as taught by Jesus and his Apostles.—“Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you, and whatsoever ye would

that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them." He taught the people throughout all Jewry, to "render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's." He even wrought a miracle to furnish the means of paying his own and disciples' tribute money. But we cannot find an instance of his working a miracle to supply his own necessities, although so poor that he had not where to lay his head. He ever taught the Jewish nation and his Apostles, and through them the world, to render unto all men their due, whether of tribute, custom, or honour. He enjoined them to submit themselves to the Powers that be, and, to obey the laws of their Sovereigns and civil Magistrates so far as they might be in unison with the commands of God. Although he spoke so freely of the duties of the subject, he treated the great ones of the earth as men accountable to God, for the talents entrusted to their charge. His Apostles, taught by their divine Lord and Master, neither flattered the vices, nor courted the favours of kings or nobles, for they were no sycophants. Although the doctrine of Jesus was so pure and Godlike, and his life displayed every virtue, (for in his spirit there was no guile) and, is the only one amongst Adam's race, who was free from

sin, yet against him was the tongue of the slanderer busy, and calumny dared to raise her voice. Yea "false witnesses did rise up and lay to his charge things that he knew not."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

But I, as a deaf man, heard not; and I was as a dumb man that openeth not his mouth. Thus, I was as a man that heareth not, and in whose mouth are no reproofs. Psalm xxxviii. 13, 14.

Does not the perusal of these words lead the mind back to the palace of Caiaphas, and the hall of Pilate, when Jesus appeared there, surrounded by his blood-thirsty persecutors, who, in the bitterness of their malice, vehemently and unjustly accuse him of crimes his soul abhorred. But, the meek and lowly Jesus heard their falsehoods with silent composure. Their calumnies aroused no angry passions in his spotless soul. Though conscious of the injustice of their proceedings, he made no remonstrance. Even Pilate marvelled at his silence, and exclaimed, hearest thou not how many things these witness against thee? But Jesus answered not a word. He was "as a deaf man who heard not, or as one that is dumb so he opened not his mouth." Yet his silence was not

the effect of sullenness, and, though innocent of crimes alleged against him, he deigned not to vindicate his character, nor did his noble spirit stoop to load with reproach even his bitterest enemies. "Though reviled, he reviled not again; in his mouth there were no reproofs." Jesus, aware of the situation in which he stood as the sinner's surety, looked beyond the bar of Pilate, to the Tribunal of God's Justice: for though no sin was *in* him, yet, by imputation, he was loaded *with* sin.* Though he was unjustly condemned to death by the Roman Governor, he viewed the sentence gone forth against him in the Court of Heaven, and, seeing the hand of the Lord in this matter, he was dumb, and opened not his mouth, "because thou, O God, didst it." This is discovered in the reply he made to Pilate's imperious question, "Knowest thou not, that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?" Jesus answered, "thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above." Although innocent of the crimes preferred against him, at Pilate's bar, yet, Jesus knew that he stood charged before God, with the imputed mass of his people's sins

* Isaiah liii. 6.

for which he had made himself responsible. Is it not to this, we must attribute the otherwise extraordinary silence Jesus manifested at the injustice of Pilate's sentence?

CHAPTER XXXIX.

My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore, and my kinsmen stand afar off.—Psalm xxxviii. 11.

How forcible and just the remark of the wisest of men, "that every man is a friend to him that giveth gifts." But, in the day of adversity, how few are treated with kindness and attention by their former acquaintance and professed friends. At one time we see five thousand, and at another four thousand persons, partaking of the bounty of Jesus. Afterwards we behold a multitude following him; but, he who knew their motives declared it was "for the sake of the loaves and fishes." When he was so actively engaged in healing the sick and diseased, from all parts they crowd around, and call him Lord and Master; but, no sooner does the black cloud of adversity lower over the head of this Benefactor of our race, than the cringing throng depart; even his immediate disciples, who had shared his friendship, forsook him, and fled

at the very first appearance of danger. So precipitate were they that they stayed not to inquire or consider if mischief was likely to befall them, by their adherence to their Master. Only anxious for their own safety, they leave him alone and unprotected, to struggle with dangers and difficulties. But one disciple is found in the hall of Judgment, and even he, with oaths and curses, denies any knowledge of the despised Nazarene. But, were none found to espouse his cause? Did not the recipients of his bounty appear for his rescue? Were not those tongues whose powers of articulation Jesus had restored, heard to plead for mercy? Did not those eyes he had blessed with vision, with tears supplicate compassion for their benefactor? Were not those withered arms he had healed, upraised to shield from insult the giver of their strength? Did not those he had delivered from the power of the grave, boldly shed their hearts' blood to rescue, from the arm of cruelty and oppression, the restorer of their life? No! Silent as the grave was every tongue in his defence; no advocate was heard to plead his cause; no friendly arm was outstretched to succour or support the oppressed Saviour; "Lover and friends stood aloof from his sore, and his kinsmen stood afar off."

CHAPTER XL.

I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; I hid not my face from shame and spitting.—Isaiah l. 6.

FOR the fulfilment of this prophecy, we have only to go back to the hall Prætorium, where we behold the blessed Jesus surrounded by a band of Roman soldiers, who treat him with every species of indignity. Not content with having scourged him, (a punishment considered too ignoble to be inflicted on a free born Roman)* they proceed to insult his Kingly Office. The purple robe, the reedy sceptre, the crown of thorns, the bended knee, and the salutation, “Hail, King of the Jews,” are all used in mockery. What cruelty, mixed with insult, was here; had sport only been intended, a crown of reeds had sufficed. But no, it must be a crown of thorns, and that not gently placed on his head, but its sharp points were forcibly struck in. His Prophetical Office is next profaned, by blindfolding and smiting him on the face, crying, prophesy who it was that smote thee. They even dare to spit in his face, which by every

* Romans xvi. 37.

people is considered the greatest indignity that can be offered, but especially so by the Jewish nation, amongst whom, if a father did but spit in his daughter's face, she was treated as unclean seven days.* The Romans were accustomed to present a civic crown, composed of oak leaves, to him who had saved the life of a fellow citizen, but when Jesus literally laid down his life to save from everlasting death a countless multitude, whom no man can number, of the citizens of earth, no such civic honours were awarded him. When our first parents apostatized from God, the earth was cursed for their sake, and made to bring forth briars and thorns, but Jesus only, of Adam's race, was ever crowned with thorns. What a spectacle for the angels of light to witness! The God of glory insulted and mocked by worms of the earth! To behold that sacred face, before which they were wont to bow with adoration and love, covered with shame and spitting. But the season of sorrow and of suffering is now past, and Jesus, the Son of the Most High, is receiving the just reward of his sufferings and humiliation.† That head, torn and lacerated by the rugged thorn, is now adorned with

* Numbers xii. 14. † Isaiah xl. 10.

many crowns, and that face, once obscured by shame and spitting, now shines with refulgent brightness.

CHAPTER XLI.

He is despised and rejected of men ; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief ; and we hid, as it were, our faces from him ; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.—Isaiah liii. 3.

Thus saith the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One, to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers, Kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the Lord that is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, and he shall choose thee.—Isaiah xlix. 7.

HERE again, we are called upon, to behold Jesus, exposed to shame, reproach, and sorrow. “ He was in the world, and the world was made by him, yet the world knew him not.” “ He came unto his own, and his own received him not.” Though his visit was an errand of mercy, yet he was treated as the offscouring of all things. “ He was despised and rejected of men, himself a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief ; and we hid, as it were, our faces from him ; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.” “ Away with him ; crucify him,” was the public cry. And

to Pilate's question, whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you, Barabbas or Jesus? they all, as with one voice, instantly exclaim, "not this man, but Barabbas." Thus, he who had been cast into prison for sedition and murder, was released, and Jesus rejected. Yet it was "Jehovah's Holy One, the Redeemer of Israel, the Mighty God of Jacob, whom man despised, whom the nation abhorred, who was as a servant to Rulers." We may shudder at the indignities offered to the Son of God when he tabernacled on earth, and the thought may cross the mind, had I been present, I would not have joined in opposing and insulting the meek and lowly Jesus. Good, my friend, but allow me affectionately to remind you, that if you are still at enmity to God by wicked works; if you have not submitted your heart unreservedly to the Lord, nor accepted his free offers of pardon and reconciliation, through the blood and righteousness of Jesus; if you are not simply resting by faith on the vicarious sacrifice of Christ, as the only propitiation for sin, and trusting solely to his perfect, yet imputed, righteousness, as the ground of your acceptance with God; you are, to all intents and purposes, acting the like part, or even worse, than did the ancient rejecters of Jesus, for you despise and reject the Redeemer of

Israel, amidst the full blaze of gospel light. "If he that despised Moses' law, died without mercy, of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" We know him that hath said, "Vengeance belongeth unto me; I will recompense, saith the Lord."*

But let us not forsake our own mercies, nor longer despise and reject the Christ of God, nor lightly esteem that salvation, to purchase which, he was content to suffer ignominy and sorrow. Let us bow with humility and reverence "before the Redeemer of Israel." Let us bend the willing knee in adoration and gratitude before Jehovah's Holy One, of whom thus saith the Lord, "Kings shall see and arise; Princes also shall worship before him; the Gentiles shall come to his light, and Kings to the brightness of his rising." "Nations, the learned and the rude," shall bow before the Mighty One of Jacob, fall prostrate to his all conquering grace, and call the Redeemer blessed.

* Heb. x. 28—30,

CHAPTER XLII.

But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people.—Psalm xxii. 6.

Do we not here instantly recognise the language of the despised Nazarene? And is not the whole Psalm a striking description of his unparalleled sufferings, of his unprecedented degradation and humility? He whose will formed the universal law of nature; he who marshalled the stars, and called them all by name; who bid the planets roll, and the sun to shine; who gave the orb of day his splendid rays, and lent the moon her silvery light; he whose word the congregated waters of the ocean felt and owned, when he said, “hitherto shalt thou come, but no further, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed”—he who shared the throne of Deity,* and received the adorations of glorified saints, of Cherubim and Seraphim, and before whose footstool even Gabriel bowed and worshipped.† He whose right it was to reign in Heaven, condescended to visit this, his distant kingdom, and tabernacle here for a season in

* Psalm cx. 1. Zech. xiii. 7.

† Heb. i. 6.

the garb of humanity. Surely, if the Lord of Heaven and Earth deigned, for great and wise purposes, to enter this lower world, it was undoubtedly his just right to have appeared in all the majesty and splendour becoming his rank, and thus to have displayed himself as the glorious God. Was it not a condescension in the second person of the glorious Trinity to assume the character and office of Mediator? But, how unspeakably great his condescension in taking our nature into union with his Divine Person, even if it had always retained the splendours exhibited to the three disciples on the mount of transfiguration. Is there not just reason to believe the human nature to which Deity was united, as far exceeded in its native powers and faculties the rest of mankind*; as that the intellectual powers of the justly celebrated Newton exceeded the mental capacities of an idiot? We behold the God-man, Christ Jesus, voluntarily waiving his just claim to glory, and appearing, as the Prophet described, "without form or comeliness;" for in the eyes of those who saw him "there was no beauty that they should desire him." He was exposed to every species of scorn and contempt, his

* John vii. 46.

name a reproach, himself an outcast, the sport and ridicule of the Jewish nation. We discover Jesus, as the surety of man, cheerfully lay aside for a season all his visible and personal glory*, to recompense the injury God's manifested glory had sustained by the creature's sin. And as Adam the creature, sinned in aspiring to be as God†, so Christ, the Son of God, in making restitution, condescended to assume the creature. The satisfaction of Jesus did not consist merely in his obedience and sufferings, but also in his abasement and humiliation. He emptied himself, as it were, of all personal glory‡ to honour God, who, in the person of God the Father, covenanted to maintain and demand the honour and dignity due to God-head.§ The apostasy and disobedience of man had reflected dishonour on God, therefore Jesus submitted to shame and reproach, and to have his personal glory debased to make reparation. The lower he humbled himself, the greater honour did he reflect upon God, and the greater was the display of his love to man. When we consider the character of him with whom it is no "robbery to be equal with God," and contrast

* John xvii. 5.

† Gen. iii. 5.

‡ Phil. ii. 7.

§ Matt. v. 18.

the true dignity of his person, with his appearance and reception on earth, we are overwhelmed at the extent of his zeal for his Father's honour, and his love for the fallen race of Adam, which prompted him to descend from the heights of glory and blessedness to take the lowest rank, and most humbled situation*, in society, to raise and exalt his enemies to a participation and share in the glories of his Heavenly Kingdom. Surely "this was compassion like a God."

CHAPTER XLIII.

He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. —Isaiah liii. 7.

It is scarcely possible not to see that it is Jesus who is here held forth to our view. Who so oppressed and afflicted as he? Who so patient under insult and tyrannical cruelty? Who so silent under the voice of calumny? What lamb so patient under the hand of the destroyer? He did not resist, he did not oppose; yea, he did not even attempt

* Luke xxii. 27.

to vindicate his conduct ; but, with meekness, gentleness, and cheerfulness did he hear, bear, and suffer, all that malice could devise, or cruelty inflict. Although he bore their unjust treatment without murmuring, yet his was not the tame submission of one insensible of wrong, or incapable of resistance.*

Under the law, the lamb intended as a sacrifice was first taken to the door of the tabernacle, that the priest might have any opportunity to discover if it was free from blemish ; † and Jesus the Lamb of God was not offered as a sacrifice without being first brought bound before the High Priest. But he, blinded by prejudice and passion, neglected to perform this part of his office. Yet this spotless lamb was not led forth for slaughter, [before his purity had been attested ; and, though the Priest refused to do it, Herod and Pilate gave their testimony to the fact, that in him they could find no fault. He was perfectly free from spot or blemish. He alone is the Lamb whose sacrifice can benefit either Jew or Gentile. It would be easy to shew, that all other sacrifices were but typical of this Lamb, viewed as slain from the foundation of the world ; but, as it is more

* Matthew xxvi. 53. † Leviticus ix. 3. 5.

connected with type than prophecy, it would be improper here.

CHAPTER XLIV.

He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living, for the transgression of my people was he stricken.—Isaiah liii. 8.

HERE the Prophet presents us with another sketch, which so exactly corresponds with many features in the sufferings of Jesus, that we cannot well mistake, if we consider him as the person intended. What supineness do we behold in the cause of truth, how faint are the exertions to promote the Glory of God, to whom are we indebted for all spiritual and temporal blessings. Surely, the disciples of Christ, in every age, must blush to compare their want of zeal for their Master's Glory, with the ardour and unwearied perseverance displayed by the adversaries of the Lord. What exertion and determination of purpose, is discoverable in the persecutors of Jesus. If they cannot accomplish their object in one way, they attempt it in another. If Annas or Caiaphas have not the power (Judea being under the Roman yoke) to

execute Jesus, his enemies, nothing daunted, try Pilate and Herod, from whose tribunal, the innocent sufferer is again conveyed back to the Judgment Hall of Pilate, and eventually to Calvary. Thus was the blessed Jesus led bound by his insulting persecutors, from place to place, and compelled to walk many a wearisome mile, surrounded by an incensed rabble, who thirsted for his blood. He was, indeed, taken from prison and from judgment, but, who shall declare his generation. We may trace his journeys and count the number of his years on earth; but, we cannot name the period of time, when he first began his existence; for he existed as God, from everlasting to everlasting.* We hear the Jews saying "As for this fellow, we know not whence he is." As man, we see him cut off out of the land of the living. And the Prophets and Apostles, all join in stating, that it was "for the transgressions of his people, he was stricken." They again and again repeat the same sentiment. We are not left with a solitary proof or two, on a subject of so much importance; but it is written as with a sunbeam, throughout the whole canon of scripture. We should never

* Romans xix. 5. Hebrews xiii. 8.

view the sufferings of Jesus, but in connexion with the precious truth, that it was "for the transgression of his people he was stricken."

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CHAPTER XLV.

For dogs have compassed me ; the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me ; they have pierced my hands and my feet.
—Psalm xxii. 16.

WE cannot with any degree of consistency, apply these words to David. It is true he was often surrounded by foes, and encompassed by adversaries ; but, never were his sorrows and sufferings of the kind here described. By the spirit of Prophecy, he spoke of the sufferings of Jesus, and to him alone can we with truth apply these words, or indeed, the whole Psalm.

We see Jesus surrounded by men, who, for their ungovernable rage, are not unaptly compared to dogs ; and the assemblies before whom he was brought, proved by their conduct towards him, that they were unjust Rulers. What they called the Hall of Judgment, was, in this case, the seat of injustice and oppression. On every side, did the assemblies of the wicked enclose him ; yea, they crucified him, by

which act they pierced his hands and his feet. Crucifixion was not a Jewish punishment, but one used by the Romans, and they considered it so disgraceful that it was not allowed to be executed on a Roman, however heinous his crimes. It was only slaves, and persons belonging to the conquered territories of the Roman Government, who were sentenced to a death alike ignominious, * painful, and lingering. It was shameful, as the condemned always suffered naked; it was extremely painful, for they placed the sufferer on the cross when on the ground, the feet and outstretched arms, were then nailed to the wood, which being upraised, and one end fixed in a hole in the ground, the sudden jirk occasioned the most excruciating pains to the whole body. And when we consider that the nails were driven through the palms of the hands, and the soles of the feet, the most nervous parts of the body, the mind sickens at the thought, and is unwilling to dwell longer on so distressing an object; humanity sends forth a wish that death may speedily relieve the sufferer. But, as no wound is inflicted on any part of the body absolutely necessary to existence, the unfortunate sufferer often lingers many an

* Hebrews xii. 2.

hour in this extreme agony, before the powers of nature are exhausted and death closes the scene.

This is but a faint outline of the sufferings of crucifixion, to which the Priests and Rulers sentenced the blessed Jesus, whom we see going forth to the place of execution, carrying his own cross, and fainting beneath the load. His unfeeling persecutors, fearing, lest he should expire by the road, and thus disappoint them in their cruel design, lay hold of a Cyrenian, named Simon, whom they compel to bear the cross to Calvary, a spot, rendered sacred to memory by the sufferings of Jesus, who humbled himself unto death, even the death of the cross. Yes, he who could command a legion of angels to his rescue, here submitted to a painful and ignominious death. Do we hear the Prophet inquire "Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth the wine-vat?" Jesus replies, I have trodden the wine-press alone; and of the people there was none with me; and "I looked and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore, mine own arm brought salvation." Whenever we look to the cross of Jesus, we should eye him as "the surety of his people," as the "just suffering for the unjust, to bring sinners unto God."

It was for them he wept, bled, groaned, agonized, and died. But while Christ crucified is to the "Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness, it is unto them that are called, both Jews and Gentiles, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." Jesus, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, "suffered without the gate." "Let us therefore go forth unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach." Jesus suffered a painful, shameful, and ignominious death, to deliver his people from the bitter pains of eternal death. His crucifixion is the procuring cause of their salvation; for he died that they might live. Ought we not to admire and adore the wisdom of our God, who could cause such invaluable good to spring out of what, distinctly considered, was an act of such injustice and cruelty. We see the persecutors of Jesus full of fury and indignation, executing their cruelties on the innocent object of their abhorrence. But, at the same time, we discover, that by their instrumentality, the designs of God are accomplished. Not that their crime is in the least degree lessened. No, the hatred, malice, envy, injustice, rage, and cruelty, was all their own act and deed, and the sin and guilt, consequent on the foul transgression, is with justice laid to

their charge. The moral evil of the act, is in nowise diminished by the Lord's overruling it to accomplish his purposes and making it minister to his glory. He can make "the wrath of man praise him, but the remainder of that wrath he will restrain."

CHAPTER XLVI.

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?—Psalm xxii. 1.

If we would know whose language this is, we must by faith ascend the hill of Calvary; there, taking our stand at the foot of the cross of Jesus, we hear him utter the dolorous cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me." We do not find a word of complaint of the pains and sufferings of his mangled body escape his lips. They are borne in patient silence, the cruelties inflicted by the puny arm of flesh, cannot extort a groan or a murmur from the holy sufferer. This mournful exclamation, was not occasioned by the agonies of his body. He was not incapable of feeling them in their highest extent, (for his human nature was left to its infirmities, that he

might fully suffer) but he was so entirely swallowed up with the weight of his Father's wrath; that it overwhelmed the sense of bodily pain. Here again we are constrained to eye Jesus in the character of a surety. He had become a surety for rebel man, and he truly smarted for it. He felt the awful extent of the tremendous debt he had engaged to cancel, he found the wrath of God "as an overwhelming flood," as "deep waters in which there was no standing." At that soul-appalling season, the phials of divine vengeance were poured out, and he drank of the cup of trembling from the hand of the Lord; not a sip merely, but he drank of it to the very dregs. He felt by bitter experience that God's wrath is a consuming fire; for by it, his "heart was melted like wax, in the midst of his body." The sorrows of his soul, were occasioned by the sins of the world imputed to, and charged upon, him, and for which he then endured the wrath of God. Yes, in the six hours Jesus hung upon the cross, he had to struggle with the sorrows of death and with the fierce anger of God; he was forsaken by his Father, and suffered his divine wrath, which indeed constitutes the tremendous curse. If the thought should arise in the mind, how that Infinite Being who is emphatically described

as a God of Love, could find in his heart to use such severity toward him, whom he styles "his only-begotten, well-beloved Son, he in whom the Father is always well pleased," it should be remembered, that God sustains two relations towards Christ; the love of a Father to him as a Son, and the claim of a Judge toward him as a surety. Although God never expressed so much anger toward Christ,* as when he hung upon the cross, yet in fact, he was never so well pleased with him as then.† Yea, he was more pleased with him, than he had been displeased by all the sins that creatures have committed or can commit. It is true, mercy is God's delight, but justice is his sceptre, whereby he rules, governs, and judges the world. His attribute of wisdom, gives to both their fullest demonstration and accomplishment. The plan of reconciliation, the scheme of redemption, by Jesus; is God's masterpiece: in which all his attributes meet, and harmonise.‡ If we would know the abhorrence God bears toward sin, then we must look at the cross of Jesus. There it is God has exhibited the greatest manifestation of his hatred toward it, by his treatment of him who became the sinner's surety. The drown-

* Zechariah xiii. 7. † John x. 17. ‡ Psalm lxxxv. 10.

ing of the old world, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, together with the eternal punishment of the miserable inhabitants of the bottomless pit; never can display God's detestation of sin so forcibly, as the astonishing events which once transpired at Gethsemane and Calvary. If Jesus could not endure to be deprived of the light of God's countenance for a few short hours; then how wretched the state of those who are banished his presence for ever! Jesus well knew the blessedness of God's favour; he could bear with composure, the utmost torments that wanton cruelty could inflict; but he could not behold in silence, the angry countenance of his Father, or endure to be deprived of the refreshing presence of the Lord. Does not this display the love and compassion of our Jesus, in a most endearing point of view, when we behold him voluntarily submitting, not only to corporeal punishment, but also to the curse and wrath of God for us, and for our salvation?

CHAPTER XLVII.

Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts : smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered ; and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones.—Zechariah xiii. 7.

THIS verse, at the first reading, may appear involved in difficulty, but a little attention will enable us to discover to whom it refers. We hear a solemn call for a sword to awake. What sword? Surely it can be none other than the sword of divine justice, which had so long delayed to execute the punishment due to the violators of God's righteous law. But against whom is it directed? Against fallen and rebellious man? No, but against "my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts." The next interesting question which arises, is, Who is this Shepherd? We answer, Jesus. In the Old Testament, the Messiah is often discovered to us, in the character of a shepherd, and in the New, we find every description fully realised in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, who is the true Shepherd of Israel. But why is the sword called upon to awake against him? This may require a little history, but is easily answered from the records of divine truth. Mankind in the person of Adam their federal head, and since, each

individual, distinctively, has broken God's righteous law, not only the decalogue delivered to Moses, but the law of nature; man owing all to his bountiful Creator and Preserver, was, in point of common justice, bound to render to his Lord the tribute of his love and gratitude. But who, amongst the human race, can venture to stand forth, and appealing to Omniscience itself, affirm, that he has "loved the Lord his God, with all his mind, with all his soul, and with all his strength; and his neighbour as himself?" No, it is in vain to endeavour to conceal a truth God has declared so publicly; that by "the deeds of the law, no flesh living shall be justified." Man having rendered himself amenable to God's holy law, stands exposed to all its awful consequences. But "be astonished, O heavens, and wonder, O earth," to behold this great, this good shepherd, stand forth as the voluntary surety of his flock, engaging to take all their guilt, and its punishment, upon himself. Thus becoming responsible, for all their mighty debt, having placed himself in their law room, the sword of divine justice was called upon to execute its tremendous punishment, (the punishment due to the whole flock) on the person of their surety shepherd.

We would next direct our attention to the words,

“ The man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts :” and trace their application to Jesus. For proofs of his humanity, see him a babe at Bethlehem ; view him labouring in the occupation of a carpenter ; trace the innumerable instances given in the records of the Evangelists, of his humanity ; behold him exposed to all the infirmities of our nature ; see him enduring hunger, thirst, weariness, reproach, privations, pain, sorrow, and suffering ; yes, as man he wept, groaned, bled, agonised, and died. As God, behold him giving sight to the blind, making the deaf to hear, the dumb to speak, and the lame to walk ; cleansing the lepers, healing the sick, and all by a word or touch ; yea, at his command, the dead again sprang into life, and devils themselves fled, or cried out for mercy at his approach. When he issued his mandate, be it observed, there was no exertion of physical power ; and if he ever used outward means, they were such as carried conviction to the mind of every beholder, that the cure was not the effect of their application, but an exercise of his power, who is truly “ fellow to the Lord of Hosts.” All the essential attributes of God belong to Jesus : mark his omniscience in the instance of Nathaniel,* “ when thou wast under the fig-tree, I

* John i. 47—50.

saw thee." See him exercise his omnipotence at the lakes of Tiberias and Gennesaret, in the two miraculous draughts of fish; the one before, the other after his resurrection. In directing the fish to bring the piece of money; in walking on the sea: and the instances also, of his feeding five thousand persons from five loaves, and seven thousand from four loaves and a few small fishes, and it would appear that the fragments left, exceeded the slender stock at the commencement of the repast. Behold his omnipresence in the case of Lazarus, whom he declared to be dead although none brought the tidings. Indeed the instances are numberless, in which the unprejudiced mind may discover the deity of Jesus. It was often manifested in his declaring the thoughts and motives, not only of his immediate disciples, but of many who, under the guise of friendship, were secretly endeavouring to draw from his lips something which might give them a plea for seizing his person. Yes, Jesus discovered himself to be the omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, heart-searching God. Although his humanity and deity are so closely united, yet they are easily to be discovered. See the humanity sleeping, but behold the God arising and rebuking the tempestuous winds and sea, which knew his voice and instantly obeyed. Above all, behold

his body carried from the cross to the sepulchre, after having paid a debt, which the whole human race, through the countless ages of eternity, were unable to discharge: but it was fully cancelled by the man who is "fellow to the Lord of Hosts," and as such see him bursting the bars of death asunder, and arising, the triumphant Conqueror of death, hell, and the grave.

The latter clause of this prophecy was fulfilled, when Jesus was seized and hurried before his unjust judges; then the shepherd was smitten, and the sheep scattered, as those who have no keeper; for all his disciples forsook him, and fled.

The mighty conflict is now past; for the sword of divine justice, which had long slumbered, awoke; and, guided by the arm of Omnipotence, was dipped in the heart's blood of Israel's chief Shepherd: the man who is "fellow to the Lord of Hosts."

CHAPTER XLVIII.

They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.—Psalm xxii. 18.

THE circumstances attending the disposal of the garments of the crucified Jesus, are in themselves

trifling and insignificant, but when viewed in connexion with this prophecy, it is no longer a matter of little importance. It is equally necessary that the small, as well as the great and conspicuous parts of prophecy should be fulfilled; and it is highly satisfactory to trace, amid the more minute events connected with the life and death of Jesus, so striking a correspondence with the Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah. In fact, if these were wanting, the whole, as an evidence, would be incomplete. How satisfactory is it to find, in this instance, the very raiment of Jesus become a witness for the truth that he is the Messiah. It was not the disciples, or friends of Jesus, who parted his garments among them, and cast lots upon his vesture: but it was the Roman soldiers, who, ignorant of the Jewish prophecies, could not be supposed to have divided the garments among them in that particular way, for the express purpose of fulfilling this prophecy; which might have been imagined, had it been the disciples instead of the soldiers. These men, alike ignorant and unconcerned about the fulfilment of prophecy, could not even be anxious to possess the garments of Jesus from their intrinsic worth; no, it was only the humble dress of a poor jew: nor were they led to

attach any particular value to the clothes, from love to its late wearer, for whom they felt neither affection or respect. It is probable they were severally desirous to possess some part of the apparel, that they might exhibit it as a trophy that they shared in the destruction of the King of the Jews.

CHAPTER XLIX.

They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.—Psalm lxi. 21.

It was not unfrequent that cordials or opiates were given the unhappy objects sentenced to crucifixion, to blunt the severity of their agonies, and shorten the period of their sufferings. But, at the crucifixion of Jesus, no friendly hand presented the soothing draught. When faint from loss of blood, and parched by burning fever occasioned by excessive pain, the dying sufferer exclaimed “I thirst;” a sponge is conveyed on a reed to his parched lips; but, alas! it is absorbed in a liquid too nauseous, even for one in his famished state, to drink. Unfeeling wretches!

thus to sport with the sufferings of such a distressed object; thus to mock the wishes of one in the last agonies of death!

When the son of Jesse, in the cave of Adullam, longed, and said, "O that one would give me to drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, that is by the gate," three of the mightiest heroes in his valiant little band broke through the opposing ranks of the Philistine's army, to fetch the wished-for draught; but when the Son of God required the refreshment of a little water; when his tongue, from very thirst, clave to the roof of his mouth, and his strength was dried up as a potsherd, he was insulted with a mixture of vinegar and gall. But little did the thoughtless multitudes who surrounded the cross of Jesus imagine, that he was then drinking to the very dregs, the wormwood, and the gall, of Jehovah's wrath, which was far more bitter to his soul, than their offensive present to his taste. He was then redeeming his church from hell, that black abode of wo, whose wretched inhabitants are deprived of a drop of water, to assuage their tormenting thirst: and the horrors of the crucifixion were greatly augmented by the darkness that shrouded the scene, when the meridian sun was enveloped in the gloom of night. Blessed Jesus,

though Lord of all, thou wast treated worse than earth's meanest slave.

CHAPTER L.

With hypocritical mockers in feasts, they gnashed upon me with their teeth.—Psalm xxxv. 16.

All they that see me, laugh me to scorn ; they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him : let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.—Psalm xxii. 7, 8.

THIS prophecy is so exactly in accordance with the event, that one could readily believe the royal psalmist had stood on Calvary's mount, and literally recorded the insulting taunts and ironical reproaches used by the despisers of the suffering Jesus. The men, their actions, and the time, are exactly described, and even their insulting language noticed, with a minuteness that precludes a possibility of mistake. This disgraceful scene occurred at the passover ; at that feast, when Israel was commanded to remember her Lord's mercies, in delivering her from Egyptian bondage ; when he slew the strength of Egypt's land, even from the first-born of Pharaoh that sat on the throne, to the first-born of the captive in the dungeon. At that

solemn festival, did those merciless hypocrites discover (beneath the cloak of pharisaical sanctity) the rancorous enmity they cherished in their hearts towards virtue in its purest, loveliest form. But how void of every spark of magnanimity must be the wretch who can sport with the feelings of one writhing in all the agonies of death. How lost to all the kindlier feelings of our nature, thus to exult over suffering humanity. Surely the Chief Priests and scribes strangely forgot their station and their pride, when they could stoop to join the railing throng, and mingle their voice of mockery and insult with the Jewish rabble. How little did they intend to honour Jesus when they insultingly exclaimed, "he saved others, himself he cannot save." But we admit the fact, and glory in the truth. He indeed had then cured many a dire disease, and released some from the very jaws of death; and in those very hours of sorrow, he was saving "a countless multitude, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation," who must inevitably have perished for ever, had he not been content to suffer for them. But though he saved others, himself he would not, yea, he could not, save. His honour was pledged in the council of peace; he must fulfil the covenants he had engaged to perform.

God is not “ a man, that he should lie ; neither the son of man, that he should repent : ” “ hath he said, and shall he not do it ? ” or “ hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good ? ” “ Sing, O ye Heavens, for the Lord hath done it ; and shout, ye lower parts of the earth, for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob and glorified himself in Israel.”

CHAPTER LI.

Therefore, will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong ; because he hath poured out his soul unto death ; and he was numbered with the transgressors ; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.—Isaiah liii. 12.

To whom but Jesus can we apply this. Do we not find him reckoned with Barabbas, a traitor and murderer, and were not two thieves crucified with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst ? Thus we behold him numbered with the transgressors, and bearing the sin of many. All the Prophets, Evangelists, Apostles, Martyrs, with the Church Militant, and the Church Triumphant, proclaim, as with

one voice, his death as the expiatory sacrifice, his blood as the propitiation for the sins of his Church, and that he suffered, the just for the unjust, to bring sinners unto God. He died to redeem a countless multitude of the children of earth, who, freed from sin and sorrow, will for ever shout victory, through the blood of the Lamb. This is the great leading doctrine of the everlasting Gospel. This is the sum and substance of the Old and New Testaments. Thanks be unto God, for having given us line upon line, and precept upon precept, on this momentous article of the Christian Faith. We hear the blessed Jesus interceding for transgressors. Even when on the cross he was not unmindful of his priestly office, but amid all his personal sorrows and agonies, he did, as with his dying breath, send in a petition to the Heavenly Court, for the pardon of his murderers: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." This Great High Priest is now sitting at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the Heavens, where "He is able to save them to the uttermost who come unto God by him; seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." The God-man Christ Jesus, is now exalted to high and distinguished honours, on account of his humiliation and sufferings, and his

voluntarily pouring out his soul unto death.* He had power to lay down his life, and power to take it again, but no man had power to take it from him. He laid it down of himself. Therefore, God will "Divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong." The Man Jesus, now sits on the throne of Deity, and humanity participates in all the honours paid to the second Person in the Glorious Trinity. As he was openly put to shame on earth, is it not right that he should here also be publicly rewarded? Satan, who so long had reigned Prince of this world, is now a conquered tyrant, his empire is weakened, for Jesus has spoiled the principalities and powers of darkness; and he will for one thousand years confine this destroyer of our race, a captive in the bottomless pit.† In that bright day of millennial glory, all shall know the Lord, and every tongue shall call our Emmanuel blessed; and he shall reign a triumphant King over earth's remotest bounds.

* Ephesians i. 20—22.

† Revelations xx. 2, 3.

CHAPTER LIJ.

He keepeth all his bones, not one of them is broken.—
Psalm xxxiv. 20.

THE soldiers (at the request of the Jews, and the command of Pilate) go forth to execute their last act of cruelty on Jesus and his companions, having broken the legs of the two malefactors, approach the body of Jesus, but here they pause, hesitate, retire, and leave his bones unbroken. Whence this mark of respect, toward the object of their scorn and abhorrence? Why did not those voices, which a few hours before rent the air with cries of "Crucify him, crucify him," now urge the soldiers to commit the same act of violence on the body of the dead, though despised Nazarene. To what cause must we attribute this act of forbearance, on the part of the by-standers as well as soldiers? Surely, to none other than the over-ruling Providence of God. He who has the hearts of all men at his disposal, watched over the body of Jesus, and preserved it from that act of violence, "He kept all his bones, not one of them was broken." How exactly was the prophecy fulfilled! How striking a resemblance does the original bear to the portrait! The

Lamb slain at the Passover, was intended to exhibit to ancient Israel a crucified Saviour. Of that typical Lamb, Jehovah expressly commanded, "A bone should not be broken." Though the whole of the flesh was to be consumed, yet not a bone was to be injured.* Does not that solemn Jewish sacrifice, point us to Jesus, the "Lamb of God, whose blood is able to cleanse from all sin;"† and applied by the Spirit, will "purge the conscience from dead works, to serve the living and true God."

CHAPTER LIII.

And they shall look upon me whom they have pierced.—
Zechariah xii. 10.

ONE of the soldiers, with a spear, pierced the side of Jesus, and forthwith came thereout blood and water. "He that saw it bare record, and his record is true"‡ And we know that he saith true, that ye might believe, that it is Jesus of whom the scripture saith, they "Shall look on him whom they have pierced." There is another and higher use to be

* Exodus xii. 46. † John i. 29.

‡ John xix. 34, 35. 1 John v. 8.

made of this circumstance. Simple as the fact at first sight may appear, yet it is the strongest proof of the death of Jesus. If only blood had issued from the wound, it would prove comparatively little. But, water was also seen to flow from the side; which was either the small quantity of water inclosed in the pericardium, in which the heart swims, or else the cruor was almost coagulated and separated from the serum. If it is to be attributed to the latter cause, it confirms what the evangelist relates; that Jesus had been some time dead. But, if we place it to the former, it is utterly impossible Jesus could have survived the wound, even if given in perfect health. In either case, it effectually proves his death. Not a reasonable doubt can remain to suppose he was taken alive from the cross. May the act of the soldier, (wanton and cruel as it certainly was,) convince the infidel, that Jesus was not taken from the cross before life was quite extinct; and may he be led to look on him "whom he has pierced, and mourn." Blessed Jesus, may we often meditate on those awful scenes, when the rugged thorn pierced thy sacred temples, the nails thy hands and feet, the spear thy side, and the wrath of God thy soul. And, while we eye thee as the just suffering for the unjust, may we learn to ab-

hor sin, which is so hateful in the sight of a pure and Holy God, that the blood of his own well-beloved Son was shed ere it could be pardoned. Is not the view of a suffering Redeemer calculated to raise the Christian's confidence, even in seasons of the deepest affliction? * May he not fearlessly resign his spiritual and temporal concerns, his fondest hopes and most anxious cares, to the guidance and wisdom of him, who so loved him as to die for him? For 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."

CHAPTER LIV.

I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering.—Isaiah l. 3.

ISAIAH, or, as he is generally called, the Evangelical Prophet, (from his writings referring more frequently to the person and offices of Christ, than those of the other prophets,) when speaking of his sufferings declares, that "The heavens shall become black as

* Romans viii. 32. *

sackcloth of hair." This figurative description was realised at the crucifixion of Jesus. The sun at mid-day was eclipsed, darkness covered the land, from the sixth to the ninth hour, which, by our mode of computing time, was from twelve to three o'clock in the afternoon. The Jews begin their day at six o'clock in the morning. Perhaps it may be thought superstitious weakness, to imagine an eclipse portended some great event? We reply, *this* was not the result of natural causes. It took place on the day the Jews killed the Passover, which festival they were commanded, and always did observe at the full of the moon;* therefore, it is evident, the moon's shadow could not *then* fall on the sun, for then they were in opposition, or one hundred and eighty degrees apart; besides, a total eclipse of the sun never lasts ten minutes, yet, this was a total eclipse from the sixth to the ninth hour, so that darkness covered, at least the whole land of Judea, for three hours, which is contrary to the laws given by heaven's great architect, to these his works. This extraordinary eclipse is noticed in profane history; Dionysius, at Heliopolis, in Egypt, said of this darkness, "Aut Deus naturæ

* Exodus xii. 2. 6. 18.

patitur, aut mundi machina dissolvitur."—Either the God of nature is suffering, or the machine of the world tumbling into ruin. It was a supernatural event, and designed to show, that when Jesus stood forth as the surety of his people, he felt all the dread punishment due to them. Man, by his rebellion, has not only forfeited all spiritual blessings; but to temporal mercies also he has no claim. When Jesus, as our Head and Representative, bore the curse due to our sins, he was deprived of the cheering rays of heaven's great luminary, which was but a faint resemblance of the withdrawing of the light of God's countenance.* Behold the awful effects of sin, although it was only *sin imputed* to the Son of God. Yet, the lamp of day withdraws his shining, as if sickening at the sight. Unable to behold the astonishing event, he hides his head, and shrinks back, as if unwilling to shed his beams over a scene so tremendously awful. The event might also be designed to show the darkness of the Mosaic dispensation, which was then for ever to be done away. It was but a shadow of good things to come; but light and immortality are brought to light by the gospel. Jesus, the Son of

* Mark xv. 34.

Righteousness is arisen, with healing in his wings; and darkness, and its attendant superstition, shall flee away as the shadows upon the mountain's brow, on the appearance of the majesty of day in the rosy east. As the sun in the natural world is the source of light and heat, such is Jesus to the spiritual world; he is the Light of Life, and there is not a ray of hope or light to cheer the rugged path of sorrow, but what must emanate from this Fountain of Light; even amidst seasons of health and prosperity, all is darkness and gloom within, unless the soul is enlightened by his all-gladdening beams.

CHAPTER LV.

And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he hath done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.—Isaiah liii. 9.

It is usual, amongst many nations, for the bodies of those who fall by the hand of the public executioner, not only to be denied the rites of burial, but to be exposed to marked contempt. Though Jesus made his grave with the wicked, yet it was also with the rich in his death. Crucified at Golgotha amidst

two thieves, he shall receive an honourable burial. All the Evangelists have recorded the circumstances of his interment, and nobly distinguished the name of Joseph of Arimathea, for the marked respect with which he treated the body of the despised Nazarene. Timidity kept him from before publicly acknowledging his attachment to Jesus; yet it is remarked, though a member of the Sanhedrim he consented* not to the deed and counsel of those who condemned the Lord of life and glory. Fully aware of the contempt and scorn affixed to the followers of the crucified Jesus, his noble, disinterested spirit now led him resolutely to face it all; to rescue, if possible, the body from further abuse and dishonour. He went boldly unto Pilate, and begged the body. His request is granted, Pilate having ascertained from the centurion, that Jesus had been some time dead. Joseph is now joined by Nicodemus, (who at first came to Jesus by night,) and these two, high in rank and office, the one an honourable counsellor, the other a ruler of the Jews, are busily engaged in paying the last sad tribute of respect to the remains of their dear departed Lord. One having provided an hundred pounds weight of

* Luke xxiii. 50, 51.

spices to embalm the body after the custom of the Jews, and the other supplying the fine linen, they proceed to deposite the body in the sacred chamber of the tomb. The receptacle of this mighty dead was not the royal mausoleum of Judah's kings, but a new sepulchre, hewn out of a rock, in Joseph of Arimathea's garden. There laid they Jesus, where never man before was laid. No funeral pomp or pageantry of state, that solemn mockery of wo, adorned his funeral procession. Though its attendants were few, yet the tears of affection and love bedewed his mangled body, and the voice of lamentation and sorrow reverberate through this solemn vault of death. How was the mighty fallen ! That arm, then motionless in death, ne'er did a deed of violence ; that tongue, whose universal law was kindness, was then silent as the grave ; and that mouth, in which deceit ne'er found a place, was closed by the iron hand of death. Behold here " an Israelite indeed, in whose spirit was no guile." Surely the grave never before contained such a prisoner. Its triumphs were complete, when Jesus was brought into the dust of death.

CHAPTER LVI.

The days of his youth hast thou shortened : thou hast covered him with shame. Selah.—Psalm lxxxix. 45.

BLESSED Jesus! we behold thee cut off in the prime of thy days, in the meridian of thy strength, and in the vigour of manhood. Thy body was not worn by disease, nor decrepit by age; but thy bones were full of marrow, and thy bow abode in strength, when, little more than thirty-three years old, thou didst cheerfully resign thy body to the cold arms of death! The periods of the incarnation and crucifixion of Jesus, are very particularly marked by the sacred historians. His birth was in the year that Augustus Cæsar, Emperor of Rome, issued his decree for taxing the Jewish people; after which event, he reigned nearly fifteen years, and was succeeded by Tiberius, his adopted son. It was in the fifteenth year of his reign, that Jesus, who was then about thirty years of age, entered on his public ministry. By the Mosaic law, none were allowed to minister in the priest's office, until thirty, nor after fifty years old.* Jesus was not of the tribe of Levi, but Judah; yet, as the priesthood cen-

* Numbers iv. 3.

tered in him, it became him, when fulfilling all righteousness, to submit to this Jewish command. From the writings of the Apostle John, we can pretty clearly determine the public ministry of Jesus to have been three years and a half, that Evangelist having marked in the period four Passovers (annual Jewish festivals); one was celebrated not long after the baptism of Jesus, and two others are also recorded before the one at which Jesus was crucified; that memorable one when "the days of his youth were shortened, and he was covered with shame." A noble mind is far more sensible of shame, and feels it more acutely, than the body can any corporeal punishment, however severe. Yet Jesus, who possessed true nobility of spirit, was exposed to shame in all its varied forms. His companions were unlearned fishermen, publicans, and sinners; his character was vilified—he was accused of vices and crimes of the most odious nature, and his very name was a stigma of reproach. At his trial, he endured shameful indignities. The Jewish nation even preferred having a traitor and murderer restored to liberty, rather than Jesus. He was publicly scourged, spit upon, buffeted, and crucified as a malefactor. The only type of his crucifixion was the brazen serpent, and amidst all the ir-

rational creation of God, the serpent only is pronounced accursed.* The circumstances attending the crucifixion, were of the most degrading and humiliating nature. Jesus suffered naked—his companions were two thieves. The spot was Golgotha, a place strewn with the unburied skulls of criminals. Nor were these things done in a corner, but at Jerusalem, the chief city of Jewry. The time chosen was the feast of the Passover, when all the Israelitish males† were wont to repair to the royal city, and thus became spectators of the shame and dishonour cast upon this despised man of Nazareth, “ who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despised the shame, and is for ever set down at the right hand of the Majesty on High.”

* Gen. iii. 14. John iii. 14.

† Exod. xxiii. 17. Deut. xvi. 16.

CHAPTER LVII.

Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.—Isaiah liii. 4, 5, 6.

“ I PRAY thee, of whom did the Prophet speak these words?” was the inquiry of an Eunuch of great authority under Candace, Queen of the Ethiopians, when reading this chapter. Philip replied by beginning at the same scripture, and preaching unto him Jesus. To him alone can we apply the whole chapter. In every part it bears so striking a resemblance, that it appears more like a history written by a contemporary, than the prediction of a Prophet who lived at least seven hundred years before the character described. These verses are more valuable than fine gold—they are the key of knowledge—they open to our view a work of immense wisdom and benefit—they make us acquainted with the counsel and plans of Jehovah.—By them, a circumstance in the moral government of

God, which was before dark and mysterious, is now bright and attractive.—They shed a glorious light on the person of Jesus.—By them we understand why he who was “holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners,” was treated with such contempt and cruelty. We no longer see this part of God’s moral government, as “through a glass darkly.” The veil which is cast around his designs is withdrawn, and the glorious scheme of redemption bursts forth to our astonished senses, sparkling with wisdom, justice, mercy, and love. By them, we are taught that Jesus suffered, not for any sin of his own, but for the sins of his people. The prophet is particular on this point. The life and conduct of Jesus proved him exempt from all the corrupt principles and evil passions of the children of men. He alone is free from imperfection, and his character forms the most perfect model of all that is lovely, amiable, and exalted. In him was no sin, and even the unjust judge who delivered him for crucifixion, was compelled to declare he could find nothing worthy of death against him; no, nor yet Herod, for he had sent Jesus to him. No doubt both Herod and Pilate examined his conduct with eagle-eyes, and gladly would have discovered, if possible, something which might give them a plea for condemn-

ing a man who so publicly declared himself the Messiah. The Jews had looked forward to his coming with much pleasure, for they considered he would deliver them from the Roman yoke, under which they then groaned. The slightest shadow of guilt would have been sufficient for the purpose of these partial Governors, and it deserves observation, that Jesus was brought before them on a charge of perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, saying that he was Christ, a King. But they can prove nothing against him, for the more his character is examined, the brighter it shines; and they are compelled to confess, "they can find nothing worthy of death against him." Pilate, from a clear conviction that Jesus was innocent, proposes to release him; but finding that he would draw on himself the malice and hatred of the priests, like a time-serving judge, he gave sentence as they desired, and in the same moment in which he declared he could find no fault in Jesus, did he deliver him over for crucifixion. Yet Pilate could not conceal the horrors of an accusing conscience; sensible of the black injustice of his conduct he took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this just person, see ye to it." The people said,

“ his blood be on us, and on our children.” In what court of judicature shall we find such another instance? We believe, in none. Never did any one suffer more unjustly than Jesus, if viewed as a private person; but these verses teach us to look upon him as the sinner’s surety. Man, from his original corruption and actual transgression, is justly exposed to the condemnation of the law he has so much dishonoured. “ All we like sheep have gone astray, we have forsaken the Lord’s ways, and turned every one to his own ways.” “ We have all done that which we ought not to have done, and have left undone that which we ought to have done, and there is no health in us.” We have no just plea why the sentence, “ let the wicked be turned into hell, and all the nations who forget God,” be not executed on us. We must lay our hand upon our mouth before the tribunal of God, who is an impartial and righteous Judge, for we justly deserve the curses of the broken law to fall on us. The Divine Being (be it spoken with reverence) cannot, without injustice to himself, and dishonour to his law, (which is holy, just, and good,) allow the guilty to go free. Man must suffer the punishment consequent on his offences, or God must lay aside his justice, which is impossible, for it is an attribute essen-

tial to his existence. The debtor must suffer, unless some one be found to discharge the debt for him.

Die he, or justice must ; unless for him
Some other able, and as willing, pay
The rigid satisfaction, death for death.

PARADISE LOST, b. iii.

But where shall we find the man who can, by any means, “redeem his brother, or give to God a ransom for his soul?” Nowhere ; it is quite impossible for any mere man to deliver his own soul, and much more the soul of another. An angel, or all the mighty hosts of angels, cannot do it ; they are the creatures of God’s power, and consequently finite ; and therefore cannot satisfy the justice of God, which is infinite. The mind of man could never have discovered a proper person. Human intellect is utterly unable to the task ; it is incapable of soaring to such a height. But though man cannot find a surety, God has pointed one out, even Jesus, his own well-beloved son, who is the second person in the revealed order of the trinity ; with him it is “no robbery to be equal with God ;” for he is one with the Father, as touching his Godhead. Yet this great and glorious Personage voluntarily engaged to become the surety of his people ; to expiate their guilt by suffering all the punishment

due to them for sin.* In the fulness of time, this great head of his church left the joys of Heaven, and the praises of adoring saints and angels, to tabernacle on earth. Having veiled his glory beneath the human nature, which he took into union with his divine person, he came forth to accomplish the work he had, from the foundation of the world, covenanted to perform. As the surety, representative, and head of his people, he submitted to endure all the curses of the moral law they had broken. The Lord having accepted him in their place, and laid (by imputation) their iniquities on him, he also on him laid their punishment. Nor was it a mitigated punishment; he bore the whole weight of wo due to them. It is true, he did not go into hell, which was a part of the sentence denounced on guilty man; but he was not exempt from the buffeting of Satan. He was exposed to his malice in the garden; and when on the cross, he might be said to be in Satan's territories; for he is declared to be "the Prince of the power of the air," and having shot forth his most fiery darts, he appears to leave the scene of conflict like a triumphant conqueror, for his

* John x. 16.

adversary is beheld breathless on the field of battle. Jesus needed not to descend into those abodes of wo to feel their sorrows, for he is heard to exclaim, that the pains of hell had got hold upon him. It is not the place, but the extent, and the kind of suffering, which constitutes misery ; and Jesus felt it in a much greater degree, than even the miserable inhabitants of that wretched place, where hope never enters. They suffer for themselves as individuals, but he endured the weight of wo for a multitude so great, that no man can number them. Theirs are the sufferings of creatures, his was the sufferings of the infinite Creator ; and this it is which gives such value, efficacy, and dignity, to all he did and suffered. His were the actions of one of Adam's race, for it was the children of earth who had rebelled, and whom he came to redeem ; but what renders it beneficial to man, is that he is both God and man in one person. This union stamps a value upon his work : Jesus, by the dignity of his person, has made full satisfaction ; yea, his sufferings have more than compensated for the indignity offered to God by sin. It has given a greater honour to God's holy law, than could have been done by the unsinning obedience of men and angels through time and eternity, for Jesus perfectly

fulfilled all the commands of the moral law, and by that obedience he exalted, and made it honourable, and then suffered the penalty it denounced on the violators of its precepts. All his active and passive obedience was performed as the head of his people, and for their benefit. "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." We must look beyond the Roman governors, soldiers, and the Jewish priests and people, to behold sin, as the great cause of all the buffetings, wounds, bruises, pains, and sorrows, of Jesus. This was the fruitful source of all his we. Would you behold the justice of God? then look at the suffering Jesus, and remember that it was not *his own*, but *imputed*, guilt. Would you know the mercy of God, and see a display of his love to man? then look at Jesus. Let it sink deep into your heart, and may your soul be influenced by the truth, that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten

son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "For God can be just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." "He that believeth in him is not condemned; but he that believeth not, is condemned already; because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God." "For there is none other name under heaven given amongst men, whereby we must be saved." "He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." In the work of redemption by Jesus, we behold "mercy and truth meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other."



CHAPTER LVIII.

For thou wilt not leave my soul in Hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.—Psalm xvi. 9, 10.

THESE words are not applicable to David, for after he had served his generation, he fell asleep, and his body, interred in the royal sepulchre of the kings of Judah, which was in the city of David, saw corruption. The sentence "dust thou art, and unto

dust shall thou return." has in many a generation
 been accomplished on Jesus's LIVING SOUL. The re-
 mains of this mighty monarch cannot now be dis-
 tinguished from those of earth's meanest slave. They
 are alike mingled in the dust of death, and must
 remain hid from the eye of man until the archangel's
 trump shall sound, and the command be given. Arise,
 ye dead, and come to judgment. The hell (in He-
 brew, sheol) here alluded to, cannot be that place of
 torment, prepared for the devil and his angels, from
 which a soul never did or will escape. When once
 consigned to that abode of wo, there is a great gulf
 fixed, even the unchangeable decree of Omnipotence;
 a barrier stronger than walls of brass, and cannot
 be surmounted, or destroyed.* The word here ren-
 dered hell, (in the Greek, hades,) is the same as the
 Jews, before the Babylonish captivity, used for the
 grave, and is the sense in which it must be here un-
 derstood. This verse is prophetic of the resurrection
 of the Messiah; which doctrine is taught in many
 parts of the Old Testament, by type, figure, and
 prophecy; in the New, we behold it clearly confirmed
 by the resurrection of Jesus. The circumstances

* Luke xvi. 26.

attending this great event are repeatedly described, and the evidence clear and conclusive. The witnesses to this important fact are not few; both enemies and friends unite in giving their testimony to his death and resurrection. The soldiers having taken the dead body of Jesus from the cross, his friends deposit it in the tomb. We cannot but stop here, and admire the overruling hand of Providence in the more minute circumstances connected with the interment of the body of the Redeemer. The sepulchre was hewn out of the solid rock. No access could be gained to it but by one opening, on which a ponderous stone was placed, a seal set thereon, and the entrance strictly guarded by Roman soldiers. But wherefore all this care and attention over the dead body of one crucified at Golgotha? It is by order of the High Priest and Pharisees, who had requested Pilate to allow them to make the grave sure, as Jesus had declared he would rise again after three days. They, fully convinced of his death, and disbelieving his divinity, fear that the disciples should steal the dead body of their Master, and declare that he had risen; and thus the last error would be worse than the first. But we have cause to rejoice that they used so much caution, for it tends to establish the truth, and confirm the testimony, of the

disciples. It fully proves the death and burial of Jesus, and that the body did not remain in the grave. On the first day of the week, certain women of the company hastened early to the sepulchre, to embalm, after the custom of the east, the body of their beloved Master; but lo, to their astonishment and grief, it is gone! They indeed see the place where the Lord had lain; for an angel, by an earthquake, had rolled away the stone; at whose appearance the keepers became as dead men; but to the women, filled with sorrow and surprise on not finding the body of their Lord, this heavenly messenger proclaimed the resurrection of that Jesus whom they sought. And as they run to tell the disciples, Jesus himself met them, saying, All hail! and they held him by the feet, and worshipped him. Some of the watch, also, went into the city, and told the Chief Priests all that was done; who, having assembled a council, give large sums of money to the soldiers to say, that the disciples came by night, and stole him away, whilst they slept. This report, though commonly believed amongst the Jews until this day, will not bear examination. The more we consider this tale, the clearer will the fact of the resurrection of Jesus appear. If the body was *indeed* stolen, why are the soldiers allowed to go

unpunished for their neglect, as they say it was stolen whilst they slept. We should not expect to find a Roman sentinel asleep at his post of duty, for their military discipline was the most severe in the world. Even if the soldiers had fallen asleep whilst watching the entrance of the sepulchre, it appears impossible for a number of persons to remove so ponderous a stone without considerable noise and bustle, or to pass among the guards without awaking some of them. But even allowing the body to have been gone whilst they slept, how could they possibly know, that it was the disciples who had taken it? But is it at all probable, that a few timid disciples, who had fled from their Master on his first apprehension, should now dare to go, in the face of a guard of Roman soldiers, justly famed for their courage, and attempt to steal, and much more to carry off, the body! Let it be observed, that though the disciples had hoped Jesus "had been he who would have redeemed Israel;" yet, when they saw him laid in the grave, all their hopes that he was the Messiah fled, for the minds of the disciples were strongly tainted by the Jewish prejudice, that the Messiah's would be a temporal kingdom. Their dreams of earthly splendour now vanished, and they were about to return to their occupations in com-

mon life ; in fact, some had done so. Is it reasonable to imagine that the others would engage in a plan fraught with danger, for the sake of obtaining the body of one, in whom they began to imagine themselves deceived ? Besides, what advantage could they hope to gain by such a scheme ? What end was it designed to answer ? They could not expect to keep the act concealed ; and if discovered, they were fully convinced it would bring upon them the severest punishment. But if, as the soldiers proclaimed, the disciples did steal him away, why are these handful of fishermen allowed to retain possession ? Why did not the Chief Priest, at the head of the Jewish Sanhedrim, supported by the Roman authority, instantly compel them to surrender the body ? Why are not these men of Galilee brought to a judicial tribunal, examined, and openly punished, that the truth of the soldiers' tale may bear even the *appearance of fact* ? Surely this neglect is most extraordinary in men who had shown such vigilant care over the body when in the tomb. The more we examine the conduct of the parties, the more inconsistent does the Jewish tale appear. It is evident, the disciples were as ignorant as the rest of the nation, as to what the resurrection from the dead should mean.

Jesus had again and again preached the doctrine, yet they were at the first as backward as his enemies to believe the fact, and discovered much unbelief on the first tidings of the great event. The incredulity of all of them is a strong presumption, that as they did not expect Jesus to rise from the grave, so neither did they steal the body, and falsely proclaim their Master risen. We have a still further confirmation of the fact from the events that followed. In the interval of forty days, between his resurrection and ascension, Jesus appeared to many of his disciples, and showed himself alive by many infallible proofs; the women who went early to their Lord's sepulchre, were first honoured with the sight of the risen Redeemer. He afterwards appeared to the two sorrowing disciples as they walked to Emmaus, then to the eleven as they sat at meat with the doors closed, and, eight days after, he again appeared to them, when the incredulous Thomas exclaimed, "My Lord and my God!" He also showed himself to the seven disciples who were fishing at the sea of Tiberius; after that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; and, though some had fallen asleep, yet, when the Apostle wrote, the greater part were then alive, and could testify to the truth of these things. How

"vain the watch, the stone, the seal!" the grave could not contain the prisoner. Jesus burst the bands of death, and arose the triumphant victor. It was necessary that he, as the Head and Representative of his church, should conquer death and the grave for them. He died "that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." He laid in the grave that he might subdue the power of the grave. He, as a surety, became subject unto death as a part of the curse; but, having paid the full ransom, justice demanded his release. Having satisfied the demands of the law, it was right that he should be honourably acquitted. Though "delivered for our offences, he must be raised again for our justification." The resurrection proves his atonement was accepted by God as fully adequate to all the requirements of justice, and declares him to be the Son of God with power. It is by reason of the incapacity of the damned in hell, to take in the full measure of God's wrath due to them for their sins, that their punishment, though it be eternal, yet never satisfies; because they can never endure all as Christ could, and did; theirs is truly less than what Christ underwent; and, therefore, his punishment ought not in justice to be eternal, as theirs, because he could more fully satisfy

God's wrath in a few hours than they could to all eternity. By his complete satisfaction, the costly, inestimable price of redemption is paid, and the sinner's surety released from all the claims of the Law and justice. "Christ is risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept." Do we not hear him exclaim, "Thy dead men shall live together; with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust." "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." May we not join in happy chorus, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But, thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

CHAPTER LIX.

Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive; thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell amongst them.—Psalm lxxviii. 18.

WE find amid the records of the Old Testament, very distinguished honour was conferred by God on

two illustrious personages, whom he was pleased to exempt from the common lot of humanity, and admit into the Celestial City, by a new, and, till then, untrodden path. Their way led not across the dark valley of the shadow of death; they entered Canaan without passing the banks of Jordan's stormy waters. God was pleased to translate the bodies of Enoch and Elijah to heaven, without an execution of the sentence "dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." This was assuredly a high mark of favour; but we are in this verse presented with an event, in comparison with which, the cases of Enoch and Elijah sink into insignificance. It is a description of the return of a great and mighty conqueror, who, surrounded by the trophies of his victories, appears at court to receive the thanks and rewards his services so well deserve. And who is this mighty conqueror? It is Jesus! See him surrounded by the little band of faithful followers, on whom he bestows his parting blessing; having bidden them an affectionate farewell, he, with conscious majesty, mounts the air, and soars beyond the eagle's path, through the vast extent of space. Though he goes forth unattended, it is not long a secret that the victorious Saviour is on his way to the heavenly kingdom; for the myriads of spirits,

who are anxiously watching his motions, no sooner observe that he bends his course toward the Celestial City, but they instantly proclaim the joyful news to its inhabitants ; who, with holy impatience, are all anxious to fly on the wings of love and adoration to meet and welcome this illustrious Conqueror back to the realms of bliss. Wide are thrown the golden gates, and as they open, ten thousand voices are heard chaunting in chorus ; “ Lift up your heads, O ye gates ; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors ; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory ? The Lord, strong and mighty ; the Lord, mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates ; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors ; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory ? The Lord of Hosts, he is the King of glory.” Forth from heaven’s portals there issued a goodly band, singing as they advance to meet and welcome their victorious King, whom they convey in celestial triumph to the presence of the eternal Father ; seated on his throne of glory, he receives, with ineffable delight and joy, this, his only-begotten, always well-beloved, but now still more endeared Son, the Glorious Deliverer of the children of men. Great was the joy of that illustrious day, when the eternal Son of God,

entered the city of the new Jerusalem, as the victorious Conqueror of sin, death, and hell, whom he led as captives to adorn his triumph, for, "having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them, and ascended on high, leading captivity captive." Then the eternal hills resounded to the melodious sound of ten thousand times ten thousand voices, who sing aloud, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." Then all in heaven said, "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever, and ever." The spirits of the redeemed vie with elect angels, in testifying their love, reverence, and gratitude to the God of their salvation. They knew, if the eternal Son of God had not become their surety, not one of Adam's race could ever have entered the realms of bliss.* But in the eternal council of peace, he did covenant and promise, in the fulness of time, to become a sacrifice, and God who knew him to be faithful, did, on the credit of that promise, save all the Old Testament saints.† Jesus had now fulfilled

* John xiv. 6.

† Psalm xl. 7, 8.

that engagement; paid the full price of their redemption; "blotted out the hand-writing of ordinances that was against them, taking it away by nailing it to his cross." What wonder, if his return was hailed with rapturous delight; his presence could not fail of adding fresh joy to the happy spirits of the redeemed in glory. Yes! Jesus has "ascended on high, he has led captivity captive, and received gifts for men." It is as the God-Man, it is in his human nature, that he is said to receive gifts; for, as God, all is his in common with the Father. It is in the office of Mediator, that he has "all power given him in heaven and on earth." It is as God-Man, that the Father set him "at his right hand, in the heavenly places; far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church." He is made the great Almoner of heaven, and he disposes of his gifts to the children of earth. He has received freely, and he gives freely,—witness the showers of ascension gifts, on the day of Pentecost. He then, as the apostle quotes the words, "gave gifts to men, yea, to the rebellious also, that the Lord God

might dwell among them." But while we view Christ as glorified, let us not fail to connect the scenes of Gethsemane and Calvary. The new song in heaven, to which their golden harps are ever tuned, is to the praise of him "who was slain, and has redeemed us to God by his blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and has made us unto our God kings and priests for ever."

CHAPTER LX.

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, and your young men shall see visions: and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit.—
Joel ii. 28, 29.

THAT part of the prophet Joel from which this verse is selected, is highly interesting; and although not strictly prophetic of the person of the Messiah, yet it is so closely connected that it cannot be severed without injury to the whole. In fact, it serves as a test, whereby we may prove if Jesus be in truth that Messiah, of whom "Moses and the prophets did write." The "afterward" here noticed, alludes to

the coming of the Messiah, after which great day of the Lord, the promise here made, of a glorious outpouring of the spirit, was to be fulfilled. It will be alike easy and delightful, to trace its accomplishment. The Holy Spirit, from the earliest ages of the world, has shed his sacred influences over the church; but no visible or open display of that divine person, God the Holy Ghost, had ever been made. That great event was reserved until after the Messiah's appearance; and, when that illustrious person had publicly manifested himself to the world, then was this promise to be fulfilled. Jesus declared himself to be the second person, in the revealed order of the Holy Trinity—the eternal Son of God—Christ the Messiah; and in such character he promised, when returned to glory, to send down the Holy Spirit. Again and again did Jesus direct his disciples to expect that event. On the last great day of the feast, he publicly proclaimed in the temple its near approach, and promised its fulfilment; “for the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified.” When the faithful disciples were overwhelmed with grief, on learning from their beloved Master that he was shortly to leave them, Jesus cheered their drooping spirits with the promise of another Comforter, even the Spirit of truth; whom he

would send from the Father. To reconcile them still more to his departure, he told them "it was expedient for them that he should go away," for, "if he went not away the Comforter would not come; but if he departed, he would send him unto them." After his resurrection, Jesus again taught the disciples to expect this great event, and on the morning of his ascension he repeated his promise, adding, as it would not be many days hence, they should tarry at Jerusalem until its accomplishment. After the ascension of Jesus, the disciples were so fully persuaded that he was the Christ of God, that they continued daily assembled together, waiting for the fulfilment of the great promise made to them by their risen Lord.

It will be remembered, that all the Israelitish males were commanded to appear, three times in the year, before the Lord at Jerusalem, at the feasts of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. The feast of Pentecost or weeks, was celebrated fifty days after the Passover. It was at the first great Jewish festival, the Passover, that Jesus was crucified. He arose from the dead on the third day, and as forty days intervened between his resurrection and return to glory, there could be only seven days from his ascension until the feast of Pentecost. It was on the morning of the ever-memorable

day of Pentecost, the disciples being all of one accord, in one place ; that “ suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and filled all the house, where they were assembled ; and there appeared cloven tongues, like as of fire, and sat upon each of them, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” Such a miraculous event was soon noised abroad, and multitudes crowd to learn the fact. As the Holy Spirit was graciously pleased to make this open display of his person and godhead, at one of the great Jewish festivals, the number of strangers who usually resorted to Jerusalem at that season, either for the purposes of worship or trade, became witnesses of the miraculous gifts bestowed on those hitherto unlearned, and many of them unlettered, Galilean fishermen. The inhabitants of Galilee were proverbial for their dulness and stupidity ;* yet these men were taught, in an instant of time, to speak, with ease and fluency, languages whose very names, it is more than probable, they were an hour before unable to pronounce correctly. An opportunity was instantly offered for the apostles openly to display

* John vii. 52. Acts ii. 7.

their extraordinary gifts. Amidst the assembled throng were men of sixteen different nations, to whom these poor fishermen publicly proclaimed, in their several languages, or dialects, the wonderful works of God. They needed no interpreter, in addressing this motley crowd. How preposterous to accuse the apostles of drunkenness! Truly, we should not imagine a state of inebriety the best calculated for acquiring a knowledge of any of the learned languages. We seldom know men, (however well their heads are furnished,) in a state of intoxication, speak any thing except it be the language of foolishness. Beside, it was only the third hour of the day, (nine o'clock) the time of offering the daily morning sacrifice in the temple, before which hour the Jews were forbidden to take any refreshment; and, as this was a solemn festival, no doubt the command was then more strictly observed. How mild, yet energetic, the reply of Peter, who declared the event to be a fulfilment of the prophecy of Joel, accomplished on the return of Jesus to glory; "when being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he had shed forth that which they then saw and heard." The appearance of the Holy Spirit was sufficient to prove his personality. Might

not the sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, be designed to show that the operations of God the Holy Spirit, are like the unknown and unexplored sources of the air. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof; but canst not tell whence it cometh, or whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." This was a lesson taught Nicodemus by Jesus, the wisdom and word of God.

On Shinar's plains, the Lord, to testify his divine displeasure, confounded the language of mankind. It was a curse pronounced on Babel's tower; but at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was pleased to use the diversity of language as a witness of his almighty power and Godhead; when he publicly and solemnly ordained the apostles ministers of the everlasting Gospel, and endowed them with extraordinary gifts, as the first ambassadors of Christ, sent forth to publish unto all nations the glad tidings of great joy.

Might we not be tempted, when viewing the immoral and profane amusements of Whitsuntide, to imagine it an annual feast holden to Venus or Bacchus; instead of (as at first designed) a solemn festival, intended to commemorate the visible descent of the Spirit of Purity? Certainly the general character of the public

assemblies, at that season, bears a much nearer resemblance to the sports holden in honour of the deified heroes in heathen mythology, than to the pure and spiritual nature of the Divine Person, whose first public appearance in our world it was wished annually to celebrate. What would the early disciples of Christ feel, could they behold the sad perversion of this sacred festival!

CHAPTER LXI.

And 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 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.—Zech. xii. 10.

THE Prophet Zechariah here presents to our view one of the richest jewels in the treasury of God's promises. It sparkles clear and bright amid the records of divine truth. All earth's richest treasures cannot offer an adequate remuneration for the withdrawment of this precious promise. The words deserve our most careful examination. We will therefore consider the person here promising; the persons to whom the

promise is made; the thing promised; and search for proofs of its fulfilment.

The person here promising is the God-Man, Christ Jesus, for the words are, "I will pour, &c. &c., and they shall look upon me, whom they have pierced, and mourn." We never find God the Father using such language as this when speaking of his disobedient creatures. God is justly displeased at man's apostasy. His law is dishonoured, his works defaced and injured by sin. Yet God, as God, cannot be the subject of pain and sorrow, he is beyond their reach. But if we look at the God-Man, Christ Jesus, we behold his sacred head pierced with a thorny crown, his hands and feet with nails of iron, his side with the soldier's spear, and his soul with the wrath of God. He who suffered thus on earth, did, as God, make this gracious promise.

The persons to whom this promise literally applies, are the Jews, whose restoration as a nation to the divine favour, will form a prominent feature in the latter-day glories of the Church. The Lord has promised to gather together the dispersed in Judah, and the outcasts of Israel. "The deliverer shall arise out of Zion, and turn away ungodliness from Jacob." This nation, who once refused and crucified the

Messiah, shall, when partakers of this promised blessing, "look upon him whom they have pierced, and mourn." This promise is not confined to the Jews, but extends to the fallen race of Adam, whom our spiritual David will make inhabitants of the new Jerusalem, which is above, without regard to their being of Jewish or Gentile extraction.* He will not consider the trifling distinctions of colour, language, or nation, a barrier of such importance as to preclude their participating in his blessings.

The thing promised is an abundant outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Adam, by his apostasy, lost the image of God stamped upon his soul at his creation. The sentence, "in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," was not suffered to go unexecuted. From that hapless hour, his soul, the most noble part, was dead to all spiritual life, and became the abode of corroding passions and depraved principles. He immediately shrank from holding intercourse with God, and tried to hide himself from the presence of his benefactor. As Adam begat a son in his own fallen likeness, all his race partake of the same corrupt nature. We are ignorant of God and his ways. We need divine

* Matt. xxviii. 19. Acts xi. 18, xiii. 46, 47., xv. 3.

teaching; we cannot naturally understand the things of God, which are spiritual, the eye of our understanding being darkened; God is not in all our thoughts; we are averse to communion with the Father of Spirits. We despise his offers of free grace—we prefer to be saved by our own rather than God's method—we see no beauty in Jesus that we should desire him—we dislike to renounce our own, and trust in his complete righteousness—we consider his commands grievous, and the language of our soul is, "we will not have this man to reign over us." But we are here told of a sovereign antidote for these deep-seated moral disorders of the soul. Here is a gracious promise of an abundant outpouring of the Holy Spirit, whose office it is to "convince of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment." He convinces the soul, into which he enters, of the exceeding sinfulness of sin—that it is the evil thing which God hates; and shows the divine law is spiritual, extending to the thoughts and intents of the heart.* He puts a cry for mercy into the soul, destroys the natural enmity of the mind against God's plan of salvation, and makes the object of his divine teaching willing and anxious to partake of the Lord's

* John xvi. 7—14.

bounty, and be a debtor to mercy alone. The Holy Spirit teaches of righteousness by convincing that a better righteousness than our own tattered rags is absolutely necessary, ere we can see the face of God with peace. He makes the soul willing to be clothed with the wedding garment of Jesus' righteousness, which is the fine linen of the saints. It is indispensable that we be clothed with this livery of the court of Heaven, or we shall be denied admission into the mansions of the King of Glory. Would we behold the fulfilment of this prophetic promise, then let us direct our minds back to a survey of the glorious scenes exhibited on the ever memorable day of Pentecost, when the Spirit was, in so free and copious a manner, poured out from on high. Attend to the sermon Peter preached on the day of his ordination; mark its effects on the three thousand of the House of David, inhabitants of Jerusalem's much-famed city. Listen to their cry, "Men and brethren, what must we do?" Surely these were none of the stout hearts who dared even to crucify the Lord of life and glory? The same! yet how different their tone—how altered their conduct! To what cause can we attribute this astonishing change in the minds of three thousand persons in the same instant of time? Surely it was none

other than the almighty work of God the Holy Ghost! It was his influence on the minds of these men which produced the Spirit of grace and supplication, and taught them to direct the anxious cry and supplicating look unto him whom they had pierced. Was not the anguish of their souls, under a sense of their sins, equal to the exquisite sorrow of those who bitterly bewail the death of their first-born? However skilfully Peter might wield the sword of the Spirit, (the word of God,) it was none other than the God of all grace, who directed and sent it home with saving power to the hearts and consciences of these Jerusalem sinners. Are not the other triumphs of the Spirit worthy of regard, when five thousand are made willing cordially to embrace Christ crucified? May we not, by the way, observe, that the reception of the Gospel by such numbers so immediately after the ascension of Jesus, proved the truth of the facts recorded by the apostles, of the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ? Many, no doubt, of these early converts of Christianity, had been eye-witnesses of several of the events, and *all* had an opportunity of discovering the deception, if there had existed any, in the apostles' narrative. But no sooner are they persuaded to compare the Old Testament prophecies concerning

the Messiah, with all the circumstances in the history of Jesus of Nazareth, than they anxiously desire to be enlisted under the banners of the cross. Unable to resist the force of truth, they join the persecuted adherents of the crucified Jesus, and cast in their lot with his despised followers, although "a sect every where spoken against." When were converts to Christianity most numerous? Was it not when there existed the best possible opportunity of detecting the least imposition or falsehood, on the part of the writers of the New Testament? Let it not be forgotten that those early converts were neither won by the arm of worldly power, nor bribed by proffered gold. On the contrary, no sooner did they embrace the Gospel, but they were met at the very threshold by ignominy and persecution in every varied and frightful form, sufficiently terrific to deter all but men really convinced of the truth, and swayed by its sacred influence.

But we must not confine the accomplishment of this promise entirely to the days of Pentecost, although it then assumed a more splendid and attractive appearance, than it has done in these latter times. Yet through each succeeding age, the Lord the Spirit has not been unmindful of his covenant engagements. Could we draw aside the veil that separates between

us and the holy of holies—could we obtain a glimpse of the inhabitants of the New Jerusalem which is above, and inquire of the goodly number that surround the throne of God and the Lamb, Who was the faithful instructor and guide, that taught them to walk in the way that led to everlasting life? they would direct us to the Lord the Spirit, as the almighty guide who pointed out the road, and taught their wandering feet to tread the strait, the narrow way, the only path, that leads to Zion's hill. In the Bible, that chart of life, the road is shown with clearness, and described with accuracy. It is called faith in the finished salvation of Christ, and obedience to his commands. The hand which drew this path to glory, is the very same that painted the splendid canopy of heaven. By this good old way, all the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, and reformers, entered the city of the Lord of Hosts. Their guide and comforter, through this waste howling wilderness, was the third person of the Triune-Jehovah. What countless myriads has this almighty guide led to the mount of God, from the antediluvian worthies, down to the happy spirit just entered into the joy of its Lord! Like them, led by the same unerring teacher, we shall not fail of arriving safely at the mansion of everlasting joy, for he is the only faithful con-

ductor* to the heavenly Jerusalem; untaught by him, none can find the path of life, but will assuredly stumble on the dark mountains of sin and error, and run the downward road that leads to hell.

Eternal life is the gift of God. Christ is "the way, the truth, and the life: none can come unto God, but by him." The office of the Holy Spirit is to instruct the ignorant, comfort the mourners in Zion, and make us meet to be "partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him." May we be partakers of that inestimable blessing, for without *his* influence on our hearts, vain will be even the electing love of God the Father—vain the vicarious sacrifice and imputed righteousness of Christ the Son—vain to us the plan of salvation; and vain, all the promises of the Gospel. As well for us, if those glad tidings of great joy, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men," had not reached our ears. Unapplied, the most sovereign remedy is useless, for then not even Gilead's balm, can heal the dire disease.† Christ will prove

* Psalm cxliiii, 10.

† Jeremiah viii. 22.

no Saviour to us, unless applied to our individual case. It is the office of the Holy Spirit, to take of the things of Christ and show them unto us. Faith is the hand by which we grasp Christ crucified. That saving faith, by which we apprehend the finished salvation of Jesus, and make it our own, is a grace wrought in the heart by the operation of the Spirit of God. Far better would it be for the children of men, if the sun were turned into darkness, the moon into blood, and all the stars of heaven withdraw their shining; than that this glorious promise of the outpouring of the Spirit, should be blotted from the book of God's remembrance!

May that blessed morning shortly dawn, "when all shall know the Lord!" Hasten, glorious Immanuel, that bright day, when "the whole earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

CHAPTER LXII.

The Lord hath sworn and will not repent, thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek.—Psalm cx. 4.

IN the Old Testament, we find but little recorded of Melchizedek, that venerable priest of the most High

God, who met and blessed the patriarch Abraham as he returned victorious from the slaughter of Chedorlaomer and the confederate kings. But from that little, we are led to regard him as a person of distinction. To him, the great father of the faithful and friend of God presented the tithes or tenths of the spoil. It is from the prophetic word of the royal Psalmist, "the Lord hath sworn and will not repent, thou art a Priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek," that we are taught to view this ancient priest of God as a type: and of whom, if not of Christ? Paul, in his epistle to the Hebrews,* speaks largely on the subject; he proves the fulfilment of the prophecy, and declares, that Christ's priestly office was prefigured in the person of Melchizedek, to Abraham the father of the Israelitish race. In the same epistle, we find blended the priesthood of Aaron, in order to show the vast superiority of that of Christ over the other two, though both instituted by God himself. But as we find no prophecy respecting the Aaronic priesthood, we make no further reference to that subject, in order to attend more immediately to the words, "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, thou art a priest for

* Hebrews v. 5—11., vii. 1—28.

ever, after the order of Melchizedek." Was this priest of the most High God honoured with the title of King of Salem—by interpretation, King of Righteousness, and King of Peace? Is not Jesus proclaimed King of Zion; the Lord our Righteousness, and the Prince of Peace? Nor are these mere empty titles, but real characters, and offices, sustained by Him, who "abideth a priest upon his throne for ever." We have no historical account of the parentage or descendants of Melchizedek; he is presented to us as "without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life;" but being made like unto the Son of God, abideth a priest continually.* And Christ's priesthood was not derived by genealogy, or succession, he had neither father or mother of the family of Aaron, from whom his priesthood could descend. It is evident our Lord sprang "out of Judah, of which tribe no man gave attendance at the altar;" † neither did Christ die and leave it to others, by way of descent, but was constituted a single priest, without predecessor or successor. "He abideth a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek." It is impossible for a finite mind to

* Hebrews vii. 3. † Hebrews vi. 20.

comprehend the eternal sonship of the Son of God, whom the Father, before the foundation of the world, constituted a priest for ever; and therefore, the priesthood of Melchizedek was instituted to prefigure to us the nature of Christ's eternal priesthood. "The Lord hath sworn and will not repent, thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek." These words deserve particular attention. It is God the Father who swears to Christ; no oath of allegiance is required from him who is constituted our Priest. Jehovah, whose eye pierces through futurity, knew he would be faithful in his office, and he freely and unreservedly trusted him to maintain his divine honour and justice, and accomplish the salvation of sinners. The high-priestly office, though honourable, could not add to Christ's dignity; but his glorious person did confer honour and dignity upon the sacred office, for he who is constituted our High Priest, "is fellow to the Lord of Hosts." "Every high priest is ordained, to offer both gifts and sacrifices," and great was the sacrifice offered by Christ: he offered up himself; he would borrow nothing, but was both priest, sacrifice, altar, and temple: and "by that offering, he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." "And because he continueth ever, he hath an un-

changeable priesthood ;" " wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Blessed Jesus ! thou priest of Melchizedek's order, while we would not withhold from thee a portion of all that thou givest us, let us not rest satisfied, till we are enabled to present " our bodies and souls a reasonable sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God."

CHAPTER LXIII.

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. 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 three score and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.—Daniel ix. 24, 25.

THE harps of Judah were silent—the disconsolate Israelites hung them on the willows of Babylon—no songs of Zion were heard in that land of captivity, where, for seventy long years, they wore the galling yoke of bondage, bereft of home and all its blessings

—the land of their forefathers in the possession of strangers—Jerusalem in ruins—her palaces consumed—the Temple destroyed—the spot trodden down by the Heathen—themselves exposed to the taunts of their conquerors, and compelled to bow before the idolatrous image of Chaldean superstition.* Well might Judah's sons weep by the waters of Babylon, whose murmurings recalled to their recollection the stream which gushed from Horeb's mount.† The remembrance of past blessings increases the weight of present misery. How changed their state, and changed to punish their awful rebellions against the Lord of Sabaoth! Yet the God of Israel was not unmindful of his promise—he cheered their drooping spirits with the assurance of speedy deliverance from their captive state. The prayer of Daniel entered into the ears of the Lord of Hosts—the command was given—swiftly the angel, even Gabriel, flew to reveal his Lord's decrees unto the mourning prophet—that “man greatly beloved” of his God. Daniel was commissioned to foretel the deliverance of the Jews from Babylon—the building of Jerusalem and its walls in troublous times; and to him, Jehovah was graciously pleased to renew

* Dan. iii. 4—15.

† Numbers xx. 11.

the promise of the Prince, Messiah, whose appearance all the patriarchs and prophets had foretold. The nearer that glorious epoch approached, the more minutely was it described. The Lord gave Daniel to "know and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem unto the Messiah, the Prince, should be seven weeks, and three score and two weeks." The period here styled weeks, is generally allowed to be sabbaths of years. This appears to be the sense of the passage, for the Jews were accustomed to reckon their time and feasts by weeks or sabbaths. The week of days was from one seventh or sabbath day to another. The week of years was from one seventh or sabbatical year to another; in the seventh, or sabbatical year, they neither sowed their fields nor pruned their vineyards; it was a sabbath of rest unto the land.* In the regulation of the year of Jubilee, they were commanded to number "seven sabbaths of years, seven times seven years, and the space of the seven sabbaths of years shall be to thee forty and nine years."† We therefore only follow the Mosaic rule, (to which Moses' disciples cannot object,) if we consider these seven weeks,

* Lev. xxiii. 3., xxv. 3. 4.

† Lev. xxv. 8. 10.

and three score and two weeks, as seven times sixty-nine, or four hundred and eighty-three years, which should be between "the going forth of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem unto the Messiah, the Prince." There were four distinct decrees or commandments granted by the kings of Persia, in favour of the Jews, who came under the dominion of that empire by its conquest of Babylon. This was the epoch of Daniel's vision. No sooner had Cyrus obtained possession of Chaldea, than he issued a decree allowing the Jews to quit the land of their captivity, and repair to Judea to build the temple of the Lord. He also restored to them the vessels and treasures which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple built by Solomon. On the grant of this decree,* five hundred and thirty-six years before Christ, many of the Jews returned to their own land, and laid the foundation of the temple; but they were hindered in the building of it by their several enemies, who were supported in their opposition by Artaxerxes, the successor of Cyrus. But when Darius Hystaspes ascended the throne of Persia, he issued a decree† five hundred and nineteen years before Christ,

* 2 Chron. xxxvi. 22, 23.

† Ezra vi. 7—12.

forbidding the enemies of the Jews to interrupt the building of the temple, and further commanded that materials requisite for the work, and the animals, oil, and wine for the sacrifices, should be supplied at his (the king's) cost. The third decree was granted to Ezra, the scribe, four hundred and sixty-seven years before Christ, by Artaxerxes Longimanus, in the seventh year of his reign, by which he bestowed great favours upon the Jews,* appointing Ezra Governor of Judea. He permitted all the Jews to return to Jerusalem, and commanded his treasurers beyond the river, to supply Ezra with such things as he needed for the house of his God, even to an hundred talents of silver, an hundred measures of wheat, an hundred baths of wine, and an hundred baths of oil. The king and his princes presented much silver and gold, and many vessels, and ordered that what else might be required for the house of God, should be supplied from the king's treasury. This is not the same Artaxerxes who listened to the slanderous reports of the enemies of the Jews, and stopped the building of their temple; but Artaxerxes, surnamed Longimanus, supposed to be the person styled Ahasuerus, in the book of Esther,

* Ezra vii. 11—23.

whose attachment to his Israelitish consort may account for the distinguished favours he conferred on the people of her nation. We find the queen was present when Nehemiah presented his petition, which was the second decree granted by this monarch, and was the fourth and last decree, being granted in the twentieth year of his reign, and four hundred and fifty-four years before Christ.* This was the most efficient decree, for by it Jerusalem and its walls were built. The high resolves of the court of Heaven were revealed; Daniel was made “to know and understand that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem, *unto* the Messiah, the prince, shall be seven weeks, and three score and two weeks, being sixty nine weeks, or four hundred and eighty-three years. From the last, or fourth, decree to the birth of Christ, (vide Rollin, volume 8, page 265,) is four hundred and fifty-four years, to which we add twenty-nine years (the age at about which Christ entered on his public ministry); † these united, make the exact period of sixty-nine weeks, or four hundred and eighty-three years. Daniel also declares that “seventy weeks (or four hundred and ninety

* Neh. ii. 1—8.

† Luke iii. 23.

years) 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." We find between the seventy weeks, or four hundred and ninety years, and the sixty-nine weeks, or four hundred and eighty-three years, a difference of one week, or seven years, which is the week evidently alluded to in the twenty-seventh verse of this chapter, in which " he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week, &c." From the period of Christ's first entry into the ministry, and the calling of his apostles, until his crucifixion, were three and a half years, and, for three and a half years after that event, his apostles continued to minister amongst the Jews. This makes a period of seven years, (or one prophetic week,) in the midst of which the Messiah was cut off, and " the sacrifice and oblation" virtually ceased. The correspondence is exact; Jesus, the Messiah, not only entered on his public ministry at the very period pointed out ages before, but was actually cut off in the midst of the week, as was expressly foretold. These predictions of the Prince Messiah are peculiarly striking. The time for his appearance is marked, and

the particular objects he should effect on his coming, are described with such minuteness, as scarcely to admit of the possibility of mistaking his person. The grand features of his mission were so strongly exhibited, that it was morally impossible the Messiah should appear and not be recognised. Prejudice must have blinded the eye of that mind which does not, on comparing the whole of the New Testament with this prophecy, acknowledge Jesus of Nazareth to be the Messiah. It bears the stamp of divine prescience : none but the omniscient God could have given his features with such clearness so many ages before. This portrait of the Messiah, which bears so exact a resemblance to Jesus, was in the possession of the Jews, at least five hundred years before that glorious person was exhibited to the world, a God incarnate.

Jesus declares himself to be the long promised Messiah—his claim rests on no slight or doubtful evidence—he came at the very precise time it was foretold the Messiah should appear to the people and the holy city. Christ's ministry was among the people of the Jews—Judea was the land of his nativity—the scene of his labours—the witness of his miracles—he was born at Bethlehem, near Jerusalem, and crucified just “without the gate” of the holy city.

On Calvary "he finished the transgressions, and made an end of sin, and make reconciliation for iniquity." There the God-man, Christ Jesus, offered up his life a ransom for the guilty—there the surety of the Church paid the full price for her redemption, and made peace by the blood of his cross—there "he suffered the just for the unjust to bring sinners unto God." He took away "the hand-writing of ordinances that was against us, taking them out of the way by nailing them to the cross"—there he removed the iniquity of the land in one day, and so completely "finished the transgression," by suffering the punishment due for his people's sins, that when they are "sought for they shall not be found"—there he paid the full price of their redemption, he cancelled the bond, and made peace and reconciliation with offended justice. He "brought in an everlasting righteousness, and not only suffered the penalty due for their transgressions of God's law, 'which is holy, just, and good,' but, as the head of the Church, he obeyed all the precepts of the moral law; which he exalted and made honourable. Perfect was the obedience wrought out—complete was the righteousness brought in by the incarnate Deity, the Lord our righteousness, which is from everlasting to everlasting "unto all and upon all that

believe, for there is no difference." Amidst the awful gloom on Calvary's mount, was heard the cry "it is finished!" It was the conqueror's shout—victory was achieved—Satan was vanquished—the sting of death was taken away—the power of the grave destroyed—the conflict was over—the ransom paid—the captives of the mighty delivered—the law was honoured—justice satisfied—God glorified—Heaven opened—man redeemed—and hell vanquished. That was the glorious event which types were intended to exhibit, and prophets were commissioned to proclaim. The appointed time of the vision was arrived—it had long tarried, but it was accomplished. The chain of prophecy was complete—the vision was sealed*—and the most holy anointed. The God-man, Christ Jesus, anointed by his Father king and priest of Zion, then exchanged his thorny crown for the royal diadem—then left the sorrows of earth for the glories of his mediatorial throne, which no enemy can touch—their opposition is vain—he that sitteth upon the circle of the heavens, will laugh them to scorn. Happy are they who have for their king and priest, *him* whose kingdom is eternal, and priesthood un-

* Rev. xxii. 18, 19.

changeable—who look to the Redeemer of Israel as the rock of their salvation, and crown the most holy, Lord of all. “Happy are the people that are in such a case, yea, blessed are the people whose God is the Lord.”

CHAPTER LXIV.

And after three score 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.—Daniel ix. 26.

THIS vision of Daniel appears involved in considerable obscurity, by the diversity of time alluded to in the several parts of the prophecy, and renders it difficult to prove its exact accomplishment. But we hope we have shown in the preceding part, that it does not militate against “the truth as it is in Jesus,” it rather tends to strengthen the testimony, by affording an additional opportunity of proving, from sacred and profane history, the fulfilment of the great event. The proof of its accomplishment does not rest on the insulated fact, but is established by a chain of evidence, derived from the annals of nations. For, whichever of the decrees we take, it is clear from ancient chronology, that the period alluded to is passed,

and the Messiah did appear not far from the time named by any decree. As we have attempted to prove the fulfilment of the first part of the prophetic vision, it may not be improper if we now endeavour to show that the remaining part of this interesting prophecy has also been accomplished.

“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.” “Secret things belong unto God; but things that are revealed, to you and your children.” We cannot ascertain to a certainty when the seventy-two weeks commence, but it is evident they terminate at the cutting off of the Messiah. From the words “And the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined,” it appears, also, to allude to the destruction of the city, previous to which event the Messiah should be cut off. We hope we shall not offer any violence to the words, if we give them this interpretation. The destruction of Jerusalem is not the only event alluded to in this interesting prophecy; there is one of paramount importance to the ruin of Salem’s palaces, though that involved the fate of Judah’s sons. On the other momentous fact hang the highest interests

of Jew and Gentile, bond and free, past, present, and future generations ; not only the happiness of earth, but much of the glory of heaven, depends on its accomplishment. Without it no sweet song of " Salvation to God and the Lamb," would have echoed amidst the heavenly hills, none of the race of Adam would be seen worshipping before the presence of Jehovah with the angels of light ; those melodious hymns of redemption, now chaunted by ten thousand times ten thousand glorified Saints, had not been heard but for the vicarious sacrifice of the Son of God,* who not only covenanted, but did actually lay down his life a ransom for sinners. When Jesus, the Christ of God, the Prince Messiah, appeared on earth, it was not simply to set the children of men an example of piety and virtue ; we ardently admire his glorious example, and consider his followers bound to imitate the bright pattern he has left them ; yet we dare not believe that *that* was the only object he designed to accomplish when he visited our world.† No, he came as the federal Head, the Representative and Surety of his people.‡ He was " cut off from the land of

* John xiv. 6.

† John xii. 27.

‡ 1 Corinthians xv. 22. Romans v. 17—19.

the living," by a violent and cruel death; yet not for himself, not for any sin of his own,* nor purposely to set us a pattern of patience and resignation; but to discharge the debt of sin, he had covenanted to cancel on man's account. Jehovah executed towards him the severest justice, and permitted his crucifiers to exercise the blackest ingratitude, and most inhuman cruelty. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou who killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would the Lord have gathered thee under his protecting care as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not." Thy awful doom was sealed when thou didst reject the authority, and persecute unto death Jesus the Messiah, thy prophet and benefactor, thy God and King. The thought of thy approaching misery drew tears from the eyes, and groans from the heart, of Incarnate Deity; yet thy children beheld, with feelings of triumphant scorn, the sorrows and sufferings their wanton cruelty inflicted on the Holy Jesus. But heaven marked the impious deed.† The blood of Jesus, of prophets, of apostles, and of martyrs, called for vengeance on thy guilty land; the cry was heard, justice remembered thy

* Luke xxiii. 4. Isaiah liii. 5, 10. † Matthew xxiii. 35—37.

black catalogue of crimes, the King of heaven beheld the insult offered to his beloved Son, and Jehovah arose to punish thy rejection of Jesus the Messiah, whom "ye would not have to reign over you." The crimes of Jerusalem were of the blackest and most awful character, and her punishment was tremendously dreadful.* The Israelites, once the peculiar favourites of Heaven†—nursed in the lap of plenty, instructed in the oracles of God—blessed with the temple of Jehovah—taught to adore the God of truth whom their forefathers worshipped; this people, who once had the Lord for their Law-giver and King,‡ were compelled to bow beneath the oppressive power of arbitrary despots—the law of truth was exchanged for the tyrant's mandate—equity and justice were banished the walls of Salem, and despotism, oppression, blasphemy, and pride, reigned within that devoted, miserable, city. Anarchy and confusion ruled that senate and sanctuary, once as gloriously distinguished from the rest of the world by the purity of its government, as by the richness and elegance of its buildings. Jerusalem was devoted to destruction, and she sunk beneath

* Matthew xxiv. 21.

† Deuteronomy iv. 7.

‡ Deuteronomy iv. 5, 8.

the accumulated horrors of war, famine, fire, and pestilence. Internal faction and a foreign foe reduced that beautiful city and magnificent sanctuary, to a heap of ruins. The temple fell—not all the commands, promises, or threats of Titus, could save that splendid edifice from destruction; the people of the prince, regardless of their general's orders, helped to complete the work of desolation;—but prophecy was fulfilled, Jerusalem was overwhelmed with the flood of divine vengeance, and desolation prevailed even unto the end of the war.

CHAPTER LXV.

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.—
Daniel ix. 27.

SOME writers consider this verse prophetic of the desolate state of Jerusalem under Antiochus Epiphanes, that sacrilegious monarch who impiously profaned the sanctuary of the God of Israel. By him the temple was ransacked and despoiled of its holy vessels; its golden ornaments pulled off; its hidden

treasures seized ; and an unclean animal offered on the altar of burnt-offerings. Thus did this impious Syrian king dare profane the altar and temple dedicated to Jehovah. Neither was this all ; Jerusalem again felt the force of his horrid cruelty and profaneness ; men, women, and children, were either slain or taken captive ; and the houses and city walls were destroyed. The Jews were not allowed to offer burnt offerings or sacrifices to the God of Israel—circumcision was forbidden—they were required to profane the Sabbath, and eat the flesh of swine, and other beasts forbidden by their law*—the sanctuary dedicated to Jehovah was called the temple of Jupiter Olympius, and his image set up on the altar—idol temples and altars were erected throughout all their cities—and the Holy Scriptures destroyed whenever they were met with—and death was the fate of those who read the word of the Lord. The most horrid and brutal cruelties were inflicted on such as chose to obey God, rather than this Syrian monster. Jerusalem was overspread by his abominations ; desolation was indeed poured out “ upon the desolate ” when Antiochus Epiphanes held the blood-stained sceptre,

* Leviticus xi. 2, 7, 8.

emblem of satanic power. Yet, closely as these circumstances resemble the description given by the prophet's vision, we cannot think it is the event alluded to in this prophecy. Daniel, in the three preceding verses, speaks of the Messiah, and the final destruction of the city and sanctuary: by Antiochus the temple certainly was *not* destroyed. In the eleventh chapter there appears a striking prophecy of the events which happened in Jerusalem during the dominion of the Syrian tyrant, but we cannot think he is alluded to in any part of the ninth chapter. The first clause of this verse, "He shall confirm the covenant with many," cannot refer to Antiochus, but alludes to the same glorious person mentioned in the preceding verses. The latter part of this verse may with propriety be considered as a continuance of the prophecy of Jerusalem's final destruction, as it occurred under Titus. To Jesus the Messiah we direct our eyes. The one week, or, the midst of the week, (seven years half expired,) alludes to the time of his Public Ministry, which was three years and a half; during which period he declared, the design of his mission was to confirm the well-ordered covenant of redemption and peace, which was drawn up in the counsels of eternity—sealed on earth with the blood of the Incarnate God—

signed in the presence of Jehovah, angels, men, and devils—registered in the court of Heaven—and proclaimed good and valid by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.* It is true, the sacrifices and oblations of the temple service did not cease immediately on the death of Christ, they were continued some little time after that event; but they became unnecessary, they had lost their value, and were but idle ceremonies and useless rights, when the thing signified was accomplished. At best, they were only types of the Lamb of God, the blood of that one great sacrifice, which alone “cleanseth from all sin.” “It is not possible for the blood of bulls or goats to take away sin.” No, the sacrifices and ceremonies of the Mosaic economy were only efficacious so far as Christ, the substance, was viewed through the shadow.† In less than forty years after the death of Christ, the sacrifices and oblations ceased, for the temple was demolished. A spot so deeply stained with crime, needed the fire of divine vengeance to consume it from the face of the earth: it was erected for the worship of the God of Israel, but was

* 1 Timothy iii. 16. Acts ii. 24, 33.

† Hebrews iv. 2. x. 1—10, 20.

turned into the seat of iniquity and profaneness. The horrid enormities observed in the temple of Juggernaut scarcely surpassed the impious practices exercised within the Jewish sanctuary. When Titus, the Roman general, approached the walls of the city, it more resembled the court of Mars and Bacchus, than the temple of Jehovah; the drunkard's voice—the clash of arms—the shouts of the victor—the cries of the vanquished—and the groans of the dying, echoed through that magnificent pile; human blood flowed in its courts, and sprinkled its altars and its walls. Jerusalem was a scene of slaughter; but it was not a war to support the glorious cause of freedom; nor were they fighting to repel the foreign foe, or shedding their blood to defend their beloved homes, and the still dearer objects of affection, around which the warm heart clings with fondest thought amidst the scene of danger and of death, and for whose preservation the weakest arm grows desperate, and the feeblest mind resolves to conquer or to die. But theirs was no such glorious contest; no—civil war had reared her hydra head; the horrid yell of intestine discord rang through Salem's courts, and echoed round her walls; that infernal power bursts the bands of brotherhood, severs the closest ties, dissolves the strongest

link of union, and makes the man a monster. The sword of her own sons deluged Jerusalem with Jewish blood; the fire which destroyed her houses was kindled by her own children; death and destruction reigned through all her palaces; the city groaned beneath a three-fold faction, when the Roman legions approached her walls to complete the horrid scene of slaughter. The temple was the head-quarters of Eleazar and the Zealots; they had in their possession the stores of first fruits and offerings, and were frequently in a state of intoxication; but when not drunken with wine, they thirsted for the blood of their countrymen, and issued from their strong hold, to assault John and his party, who lay intrenched in the out-works of the temple. The ruin of Jerusalem is attributed to the horrid enormities of the Zealot faction: surely that was the summit of wickedness, when the priests sold themselves to work iniquity, and the temple of the Lord was the seat of their crimes. That was "the overspreading of abomination," and it continued until the sanctuary was consumed, and "ruin was poured upon the desolators." It was the iniquitous practices of the Jews, rather than the Roman eagle, which profaned the courts of the Lord's House: the conquerors did not plant their standard to

insult, but with a wish to preserve, the temple from total ruin and destruction.

CHAPTER LXVI.

For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city.—Zechariah xiv. 2.

IMPERIAL Rome, to whom the world once bowed, and whose power could command armies from “all nations,” had conquered Judea, and received from her the yearly tribute of her subjection: * but, through the oppression of the Roman governors, and the madness of the people, the standard of revolt was planted, and the Jews attempted to break their yoke of bondage. The Roman legions, inured to war, and accustomed to the shout of victory, hastened to subdue the rebellious Israelites: they passed from city to city, and from province to province; slaughter and death marked their course; the strife was desperate; the conflict bloody; the Jews fought like men determined to conquer or to die: two hundred and forty-seven thousand seven

* Luke ii. 1. Matthew xxii. 17.

hundred were slain before their provinces were subjugated, and an immense number made prisoners: amongst whom was Josephus, the historian of the war, who was governor of the two Galilees, and who defended them with skill and bravery. The Romans, having conquered the provinces, approached to assault Jerusalem, which was then a dreadful scene. The sound of war was heard through all her gates; regardless of the approaching foe, the Jews had turned their arms against each other; three several factions were busily engaged in the work of slaughter and destruction. Eleazar and the Zealots seized the temple; John of Gischala and his followers occupied its out-works; and Simon, the son of Gorias, possessed the whole of the lower, and a great part of the upper, town. Jerusalem was built on two hills; the highest, on which stood the temple, was called the upper town, and the other the lower: between these lay a valley covered with houses; the suburbs of the city were extensive, and encircled by a wall; two other walls also surrounded Jerusalem, the interior one of remarkable strength. Neither of the three factious parties had any just claim to supremacy or power, though all contended for dominion, and fought for plunder. The Zealots were the smallest party,

but, from their situation, possessed the advantage: they sallied from their strong holds to attack John, who seized every opportunity of assaulting Simon; thus John maintained a double war, and was often obliged to divide his forces, being attacked by Eleazar and Simon at the same time. In these furious contests, no age or sex was spared; the slaughter was dreadful. When either party was repelled, the other set fire to the building, without any distinction. Regardless of their contents, they consumed granaries and store-houses, which contained a stock of corn and other necessaries of life, sufficient to maintain the inhabitants during a siege of many years; but nearly the whole was burnt, and this circumstance made way for a calamity more horrid than even war itself. Famine soon showed her meagre form, and all classes felt the dreadful effects of a scarcity of food. Such was the miserable state of Jerusalem when the Roman general Titus (son of the reigning emperor, Vespasian,) prepared to attack the city. The sight of a powerful foreign foe at their gates, with all the artillery of war, could not quell the factions within; it is true, when closely pressed by the Romans, the three parties joined to repel the common enemy, but no sooner had they breathing time, than the spirit of contention

arose, and they resumed the slaughter of each other: thus they maintained a fierce contest with the besiegers, and, at the same time, seized every opportunity of destroying each other. The misery of the city was soon beyond precedent, from the dreadful effects of famine; the price of provisions became exorbitant, and, when no longer offered for sale, the houses were entered and searched, and the wretched owners tortured till they confessed where the slender pittance was concealed; at length the distress became so great, that persons parted with the whole of their property to obtain a bushel of wheat, which they eat before it could be baked, or even ground; and happy was he who could catch a morsel of meat, half roasted, half raw, from the fire. No kind of cruelty was omitted in search of food: at length their sufferings were so severe, that the wretched inhabitants were necessitated to search the vaults and sinks for sustenance, and even fed on articles too offensive to be named. The ties of nature and humanity were forgotten, the wife seized the food from her husband, the child from the parent, and even the mother from her infant.* The excruciating pain of famine so far

* Deut. xxviii. 48—59.

overpowered the tenderest and finest affections in nature, that a woman, descended from a rich and respectable family, even killed, boiled, and ate, her own child, a son in all the artless and endearing simplicity of infancy! Well may the British mother tremble at the horrid sound, and pity the wretched Israelitish female, thus sunk below the brute. Pestilence now stalked abroad, for the air was tainted by the dead : though no less than six hundred thousand dead bodies were carried out of the city during the time Titus encamped before the walls, yet there was an incredible number who had no friends to bury them, and their bodies were enclosed in large buildings, or laid in heaps in the open air. “ O Jerusalem, thou didst drink at the hand of the Lord the cup of his fury, thou hast drunken the dregs of the cup of trembling, and wrung them out ” even desolation, destruction, famine and sword, “ thy houses rifled, thy women ravished ” by Jewish ruffians, and the city at length taken by the Roman general. Titus had again and again offered the Jews honourable terms of capitulation ; but they rejected all his overtures with proud disdain, and when his soldiers took the city, exasperated at the hardships they had endured, they spared neither sex, age, or rank. Sword and fire destroyed

Jerusalem and her children, and closed this horrid war, in which one million one hundred thousand Jews were slain, and ninety-seven thousand made prisoners.

CHAPTER LXVII.

The Lord shall bring a nation against thee from far, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flieth ; a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand ; a nation of fierce countenance, which shall not regard the person of the old, nor show favour to the young.—Deut. xxviii. 49, 50.

And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, if thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace ! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee ; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another ; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.—Luke xix. 41—44.

JUDEA was not conquered by the neighbouring Asiatic states, but by the Roman, Europeans of a “fierce and warlike countenance,” who knew not the Jewish language, and regarded not “the persons of the old, nor showed favour to the young.” It will not be difficult to trace the Roman soldiers in this

eloquently descriptive character. No nation excelled them in their military prowess, or in the rapidity of their conquests. In comparatively a very short period of time, they extended their empire over all the then civilised part of the globe. The insignia of their legions was not more descriptive of their valour, than of the unexampled rapidity of their movements. The celebrated motto of Cæsar, "I came, I saw, I conquered," was neither of a doubtful, or boasting, character. Their career was indeed "as swift as the eagle flieth." No nation or people did long withstand the fierceness of their attacks, or the persevering energy of their generals. In their triumphs over their enemies, they frequently displayed a ferocity happily unknown in modern warfare. The most distinguished of their captives, without regard to age or sex, were dragged in triumph, amidst the shouts of the conquerors, and the insults of the rabble. Often, when exasperated by the protracted defence of a brave people struggling for their existence, instead of respecting such patriotic efforts, they inflicted the most horrid barbarities upon the unresisting and unhappy objects of their vengeance; and a slaughter, indiscriminating in its fury, and dreadful in its results, marked the blood-stained progress of the licentious

soldiery, who "regarded not the person of the old, nor showed favour to the young." History informs us, that the Romans, under Titus and Vespasian, after a protracted siege, unparalleled in horror, and sanguinary beyond example, at length became masters of this once-favoured spot; and if we compare the predictions of Christ with the events which occurred, and followed at the taking of this devoted city, we shall be struck with the coincidence of the declaration, and its awful fulfilment.

His foreknowledge of the dreadful calamities which should precede and accompany the destruction of Jerusalem, caused our blessed Saviour, when he beheld the city, to weep over it: and, surely, if this once-favoured race had then known the day of its visitation, the Lord would have turned from his fierce anger; but these things "were hid from their eyes." Having rejected the Lord of Glory, they were given over to judicial blindness, and the Lord brought upon them "a nation from afar" to execute his vengeance. Jerusalem was "trodden down by the Gentiles," and there was "great distress upon the land, and wrath upon the people." The sword and the spear from without, and famine and pestilence and civil discord within, were indeed unto them "the beginning of

sorrows." The predicted day was now come, when their "enemies should cast a trench about them, and compass them round, and keep them in on every side." Their walls of strength, their beautiful palaces, and their magnificent temple, were laid "even with the ground." Not "one stone was left upon another" that was not thrown down; and all the princes and the nobles, the ruler and the ruled, the priest and the people, and "the children within thee," either "fell by the edge of the sword," or were "led away captive into all nations," for there was "great distress in the land, and wrath upon the people."

CHAPTER LXVIII.

Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest.—Micah iii. 12.

"WALK about Zion, and go round about her, tell the towers thereof, mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces," are they still "beautiful for situation?" Is Jerusalem yet the "joy of the whole earth?" Within "her walls peace once reigned, and prosperity within her palaces." But how

changed the spot! desolation and dismay reign in undisturbed possession, where elegance and art displayed their richest and most curious productions. Jerusalem is fallen—war destroyed her palaces, and levelled her temple—the fire which consumed that magnificent city was kindled by the hand of civil discord—the desolating element that blazed with awful glare, amidst the splendid sanctuary, was first lit by Jewish hands—and the infuriated Roman soldiers applied the torch, which ultimately destroyed the temple of Jehovah. The Jews having burnt the greater part of the galleries around the temple, and the Roman soldiers set fire to the remainder, Titus commanded his troops to extinguish the flames; but no sooner were his orders executed than a Roman soldier threw a fire-brand into the temple, and the interior was instantly in a blaze; the flames spread with rapidity, and not all the commands, threatenings, or entreaties, of the Roman general, and his officers, were effectual to preserve the building. Whilst some were endeavouring to check the furious element, others set fire to several of the door-posts; the scene was dreadful; the Jews were filled with astonishment and horror, and their conquerors with fury. Amidst the crackling of the fire were heard the shouts of the

victors, and the cries of the vanquished ; the shrieks of the wounded, and the groans of the dying. The ground on every side was strewed with dead ; while the courts flowed with Jewish blood, the fire raged above ; the conflagration was awful, and the massacre dreadful.* Jerusalem and its walls were destroyed, the temple levelled, and the Jews conquered, in the second year of the reign of Vespasian, on the same month and day as Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the former city and temple. The last temple, once celebrated for its magnificence, is now no more. That building which, by the solidity of its construction, seemed to defy the mouldering hand of time, soon became a heap of ruins, and “the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest.” † Titus, before he withdrew his troops, commanded them to reduce the city and temple to a level with the ground, and they left not “one stone upon another,” to mark the spot where the temple stood. So strictly was this order executed, that the demolished city scarcely appeared to have been the residence of human crea-

* Matt. xxiv. 21, 22.

† The walls were composed of the most durable kind of white stone, of massive size, each stone being twelve feet high, eighteen broad, and thirty-seven and a half in length.

tures. Only three strong towers remained of the once magnificent Jerusalem, and they were left to exhibit to future times the skill and power of the Roman troops, in becoming possessed of a place so strongly fortified by nature and art. Josephus and other Jews attribute the unparalleled calamities of their country-men, and the destruction of the temple, to the signal vengeance of heaven, inflicted to punish that deluded people for their cruelty and injustice to James the just, the brother of Jesus, who is called Christ : but a believer of the New Testament *must* consider that *they* were punished for their rejection and crucifixion of Jesus Christ himself, the Messiah of Israel, and Son of God ; it was for *that* cause “ Zion was plowed as a field ; Jerusalem became a heap of ruins, and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest.”

CHAPTER LXIX.

And he shall be for a sanctuary ; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.— Isaiah viii. 14.

THESE words are not prophetic of the person of the Messiah, yet they describe, in striking language,

the effects that would follow his appearance and ministry upon earth. They foretel the opposition and enmity that would arise, in the minds of the Jewish nation, to the Christ of God. If the whole Israelitish race had gladly hailed Jesus as their Messiah, and if all, to whom the Gospel has been proclaimed, from its first promulgation down to the present hour; if all these countless multitudes, had cordially embraced the faith of Christ, it could not have proved a more decisive evidence of "the truth as it is in Jesus," than is afforded by the Jews in their rejection of Christ as the Messiah. Thereby the prophecies of God are fulfilled concerning *him*, who, though set for a sanctuary, became "a stumbling block, and rock of offence," to the house of Israel, "and a gin and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem." The Jews were not a little vain of the glorious pre-eminence their nation once sustained amidst the kingdoms of the world, on account of the wondrous works, which the Lord of Hosts had wrought for them, by "his mighty hand, and outstretched arm." Their religious distinctions and ceremonies had also tended to feed their pride, and nourish their haughty contempt, for the other nations of the earth. Their long promised Messiah was not forgotten by them. In his reign,

their lively imaginations had blended all the splendid conquests and dazzling magnificence of regal power. Theirs was a tone of mind but ill-suited to bow before the despised Man of Nazareth ; to embrace the commands, and follow as a master, one so poor, that " he had not where to lay his head." When we consider the natural pride of the human heart, as joined with the national pride of the Jewish people, we may cease to wonder at their rejection of Jesus. They could not stoop to acknowledge even the Son of God as their ruler, when offered to them void of the purple robe and golden sceptre. They could not swear allegiance to Zion's King, when they saw neither his royal pavilion, nor marshalled troops. They could not bow before one born in a stable, though Angels had descended to proclaim his glorious advent. What wonder, if the eye by gazing so long and frequently on the dazzling splendour they were wont to attach to the Messiah's reign, could not perceive the fainter rays of glory that glimmered around the retired path of the Man of Nazareth ; they were offended at the absence of all temporal splendour in his person ; the Cross of Christ proved a stumbling block and rock of offence. The Jews rejected, as unfit for their building, " the precious corner stone,

which the Lord God had lain in Zion, as a sure foundation." They could not admit the Carpenter's Son to be the head of God's Church, nor acknowledge the Man, untaught in the schools of worldly science, to be the prophet of God's people. Neither "has the offence of the cross yet ceased;" multitudes still despise and reject the Christ of God; they are ashamed to own allegiance to Jesus of Nazareth; they blush to acknowledge, as their Lord and Master, him who died upon the accursed tree; they dislike to be thought one of his real followers, and hate the humiliating and self-denying commands he enjoins on his disciples. They prefer building their hopes for eternity on the sandy foundation of human merit, rather than on the blood and righteousness of Jesus. But if we refuse to rest on Christ, that "sure foundation God has laid in Zion," all other grounds of hope will prove a treacherous rest, from which the floods of divine justice will sweep us to the dark abyss of wo. God has declared that "other foundation can no man lay, than is laid, which is Christ Jesus." Yet how little anxiety is evinced on a subject of such immense importance! How few are concerned to build their hopes for eternity, on Christ, the Rock of Ages, that precious corner stone; that tried stone; tried by

countless myriads of happy saints, now in glory, who found him faithful to save from the overwhelming surge. Must not he, who paid the full price of a soul, know its worth? and has he not declared, that it will profit us little "to gain the whole world and lose our own soul?" One soul is of more real value than this world, with all its boasted riches and glories. The day is coming when "the heavens shall depart as a scroll, the elements melt with fervent heat," and this world, so loved and caressed by its votaries will be utterly consumed by the fire of divine vengeance. But the soul of every individual must exist for ever, either in eternal happiness or misery. Yet how is the method of man's reconciliation with God slighted? How is that glorious scheme of redemption, by the death of Christ, despised by the great majority of those to whom it is published. Do angels turn from the lofty pursuits and glories of the heavenly world, to pry into the mysteries of the cross; and shall man, for whose benefit it was contrived and accomplished, remain stupidly insensible to its excellence and glory, carelessly indifferent whether or not he partake of the blessing?

Are we not taught in the case of our first parents, the absolute necessity there is for our knowing and

receiving Christ? Was it not on the evening of the same day, in which they brake through the fence of God's command, that he was graciously pleased to discover to them his plan of reconciliation in the promised seed? And why so soon after their transgression? but that the knowledge of it was necessary to their salvation. Shall that scheme of Redemption, which required the depths of divine wisdom to contrive, and the extent of divine love to execute, be despised and rejected by man, as unworthy his acceptance? By man, that worm of the earth, that creature of a day, so insignificant amidst the stupendous works of God, that if he were annihilated, he would scarcely be missed amid the boundless immensity of space. Awful is the state of the Gentile or the Jew who "hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and counted the blood of the covenant an unholy thing."

The Jews, where are they? or rather, where are they not? To what part of the world can we turn, without beholding some of the tribe of Israel. They dwell in every land, but have none they can call their own? They have lost their power, but preserved their national features and manners. Wanderers on the face of the globe for nearly eighteen hundred years, they are

not assimilated with any people. What other nation has so long preserved a distinction? Where are the Britons, Romans, Saxons, Normans, ancient inhabitants of our Isle? They are all blended in the English. The Jews, though dwelling in every country, are still an unmixed people, yet that very distinction exposes them to persecution and scorn. The dispersion of the Jews is but a small part of their calamities. The Hebrews are a despised and persecuted race, compelled to endure, without the hope of redress, indignities the most revolting—barbarities the most cruel—insults the most degrading—losses the most severe. And this not merely from one nation, but nearly the whole world has wreaked its vengeance on this unhappy people. Even the most civilised and polished nations have stooped to load the Jews with obloquy and scorn; many and grievous are the disabilities to which they are subject. Yes, Jehovah has executed his threatened punishment upon this unhappy people, for their rejection of the Messiah. “He has scattered them among all people from one end of the earth even unto the other.” “Their plagues have been wonderful, even great plagues, and of long continuance.” They are become “an astonishment, a proverb, and by-word among all nations.”

All the prophecies of the Messiah which we possess, were handed down to us from the Jews. The Hebrew and Greek versions of the Old Testament were in their possession long before the gospel era. Its latest prophecy was at least four hundred and thirty years before the angel's shout was heard, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." Nor do the Jews attempt to deny that Jesus of Nazareth appeared at the time related by the Evangelists. Josephus, the Jewish historian, in his antiquities of that nation, (book the 18th,) relates:—"About this period, (referring to the reign of Tiberius Cæsar,) there arose to notice one Jesus, a man of consummate wisdom, *if, indeed, he may be deemed a man.* He was eminently celebrated for his power of working miracles; and they who were curious and desirous to learn the truth, flocked to him in abundance. He was followed by immense numbers of people, as well Jews as Gentiles. This was that Christ, whom the princes and great men of our nation accused. He was delivered up to the cross by Pontius Pilate; notwithstanding which, those who originally adhered to him, never forsook him. On the third day after his crucifixion he was seen alive, agreeably to the predictions of several prophets: he

wrought a great number of marvellous acts; and there remain, even to this day, a sect of people who bear the name of Christians, who acknowledge this Christ for their head." This honourable testimony is from an enemy—a Jew, whose writings were held in high estimation by his nation. Christ "came unto his own nation, but they received him not." No evidence, however bright or clear, was sufficient to convince men so blinded by prejudice. Warned, invited, and threatened, still they persisted in rejecting the Messiah, because he did not assume the warrior's sword, or mount the throne of Judah. Should we not feel more disposed to pity and reclaim, than insult and oppress, this deluded people? Have they no claim to our gratitude? To "them were committed the Oracles of God," which we now enjoy. The prophets and apostles were all Jews; and from them, "according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for evermore." It is recorded, by ecclesiastical writers, that several of Christ's own disciples and apostles—Simon Peter, Simon Zelotes, James the son of Zebedee, Joseph of Arimathea, Aristobulus, and St. Paul himself, preached the gospel to this nation. If this, indeed, be correct, their nation has peculiar claims to our regard, for the ser-

vices of their ancestors. Certainly, the Romans were instructed in Christianity by Paul and other Jews ; and, in the first century, the Roman legions, and the standard of the gospel of Christ, were planted on Albion's coast.

The Jews, though scattered and persecuted, are not destroyed ; they are preserved monuments of the divine veracity. O, may we take warning from their awful fate ! “ Because of unbelief *they* were broken off, and *we* stand by faith.” “ Let us not be high-minded, but fear ; for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed, lest he spare not us. Behold, therefore, the goodness and severity of God ; on them which fell, severity ; but, towards us, goodness, if we continue in his goodness : otherwise, we also shall be cut off.” It will avail us little to confess Jesus as the Messiah, if we are unconcerned to know and practise the doctrines he has taught. But may we “ serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling.” “ Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little.” “ Blessed are all they that put their trust in him,” for his word is fate ; immutability seals, and eternity executes, whatever he decrees.

CHAPTER LXX.

And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.—Isaiah xlix. 6.

THE descendants of Abraham, the friend of God, were treated as the Lord's peculiar people; singled out from other nations as the favourites of heaven, the Lord was their lawgiver and king. No other nation had God "so nigh unto them in all things that they called upon him for," as the people of Israel. To benefit them, the laws of nature were reversed, and nations destroyed. They were employed by Jehovah to punish the idolatrous people for their crimes.* They were selected to maintain the knowledge and worship of the true God,† and to convey his pure and holy law to remote generations. Thus favoured and blessed, the Jews were accustomed contemptuously to regard all other nations, as common and unclean; they could not endure to have one stone thrown down of the partition wall, which had so long separated them from the Gentiles.‡ They proudly

* Deuteronomy xviii. 9, 12. † Isaiah xliii. 20, 21.

‡ John iv. 9.

enough appropriated to themselves all the blessings connected with the appearance of the Messiah. But it would be a light thing that Christ should become Jehovah's servant, endure pain and scorn, merely to "raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel;" that nation which he knew would so long despise and reject him. But Messiah was given for "a light to the Gentiles," and Jehovah's "salvation unto the ends of the earth." He has asked, and received "the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession." "Yea, all nations shall be blessed in him;" for the root of Jesse shall stand for "an ensign of the people, and to him shall the Gentiles seek:" to his glorious rest shall all nations flow. He shall have "dominion from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth." "They that dwell in the wilderness, shall bow before him; and his enemies lick the dust. The kings of Tarshish and of the Isles shall bring presents; the kings of Sheba and Seba, shall offer gifts: yea, all kings shall fall down before him, all nations shall serve him. For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper. He shall redeem their soul from violence: and precious shall their blood be in his

sight. He shall live, and to him shall be given of the gold of Seba : prayer also shall be made for him continually ; and daily shall he be praised. His name shall endure for ever, his name shall be continued as long as the sun : and men shall be blessed in him : all nations shall call him blessed. Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things." Yes, Christ is Jehovah's servant, in whom his soul delights ; he has " put his spirit upon him, he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles ;" " he has given him for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles." Numerous are the prophecies which refer to the call of the heathen world, and Jesus who declares himself the Messiah, is described in the New Testament as " a light to lighten the Gentiles," as well as " the glory of his people Israel." He preached himself in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim,* and Samaria : † the parting command he gave his disciples was, that they should " go forth into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." He endowed them with the gift of tongues, to enable them to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ to the Gentiles. And they went forth and preached every where, " the Lord working with them, and confirming

* Matthew iv. 12, 13, 15, 16. † John iv. 4.

the word with signs following." "The word of the Lord went forth from Jerusalem;" it rapidly spread through Jewry, Samaria, and Galilee. Distant cities soon heard the glad tidings. Within thirty years after their Lord's ascension, the faithful disciples had preached the doctrines of the gospel at Cæsarea, Damascus, Joppa, Antioch, Phrygia, Galatia, Derbe, Corinth, Iconium, Ephesus, Macedonia, Cyprus, Syria, Cilicia, Athens, Alexandria, at Rome, and numerous other places.

The Christian faith was contrary to all existing opinions, religions, and habits; and decidedly opposed to the natural propensities of the human heart. Its teachers were Jewish fishermen, tent-makers, and tax-gatherers, poor and illiterate men,* unskilled in artifice. They preached not merely amongst men as simple as themselves, they taught at Athens and Rome, the very seats of learning and philosophy; they had to contend with men skilled in science, and were opposed by long-established customs and habits. The disciples had no eloquence to convince, no power to awe, no wealth to bribe; they were opposed by Jewish pride, Grecian philosophy, and worldly power; yet the gospel flourished rapidly over all opposition and

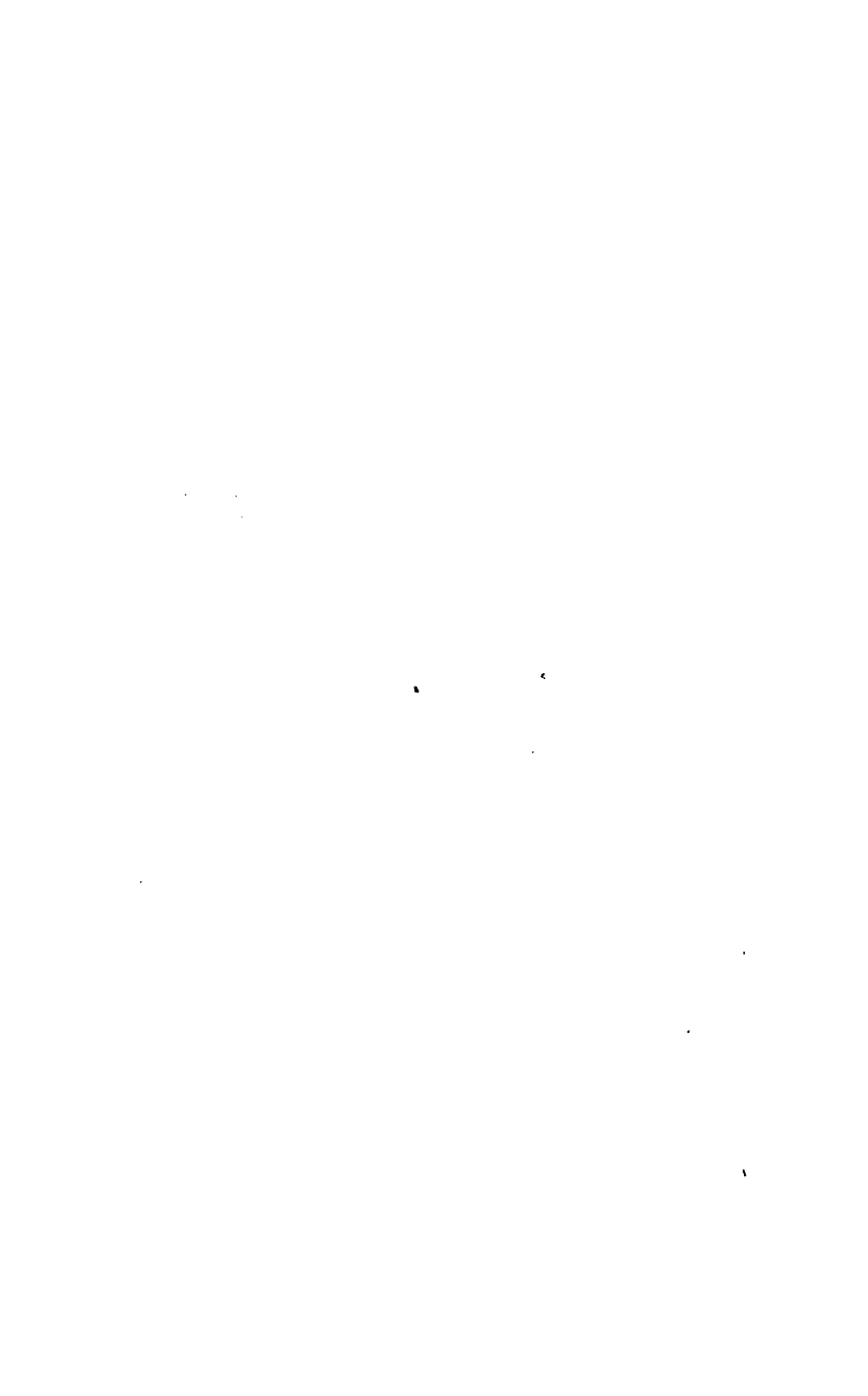
* Acts iv. 13.

stool." "For he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son; that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent him." "But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth?" Wo unto them who now dare to raise their puny arm in rebellion against the Majesty of heaven; who madly rush on the "thick bosses of Jehovah's buckler;" "trample under foot the blood of the Son of God;" and "heap unto themselves wrath, against the day of wrath." Christ will not always extend the golden sceptre of mercy, that sinners "may touch and live." The day is coming, when he will grasp the sword of justice, and arise to "judge the world in righteousness." "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." O that men "did but know in this their day, the things that belong unto their peace, before they are for ever hid from their

eyes ;" for " some shall awake to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt, but 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." Ye watchmen on Zion's walls, ye ministers of the everlasting gospel, O " heal not the wound of the daughter of God's people slightly;" say not, " Peace, peace, when there is no peace." " Cry aloud, spare not; lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show the people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins." Shrink not back, like Jonah of old, from delivering your Master's awful message. Be ye faithful to your God, to your conscience, and to souls. Let the sweet accents of mercy be heard, while ye boldly unfurl the blood-stained banners of the cross. Tell of the love and pity of him, who died that we might live; " Who suffered, the just for the unjust; to bring sinners unto God." " Pray them, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled unto God;" and accept of mercy while it may be found. Invite, exhort, entreat them to flee from the wrath to come, to lay down the weapons of their rebellion, and join your royal Master's cause; to quit the enemy's camp, those strong holds of sin and Satan, and rally round our Immanuel's standard. -- Proclaim the message that

riches of Christ," tell them "his yoke is easy, and his burden light," that "his ways are ways of pleasantness, and that all his paths are peace." Tell them "he now waits to be gracious, but that, ere long, the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe." "He will swallow up death in victory; the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall be taken away from off all the earth," for the Lord hath spoken it. "It shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him; we will be glad, and rejoice in his salvation."

FINIS.





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