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Preface

I. We have now before us the history of the Jewish nation in this book and those that follow it to the end of the book of Esther. These books, to the end of the books of the Kings, the Jewish writers call *the first book of the prophets*, to bring them within the distribution of the books of the *Old Testament*, into the Law, the Prophets, and the Cherubim, or Hagiographa, Lu. 24:44. The rest they make part of the Hagiographa. For, though history is their subject, it is justly supposed that prophets were their penmen. To those books that are purely and properly *prophetical* the name of the prophet is prefixed, because the credibility of the prophecies depended much upon the character of the prophets; but these historical books, it is probable, were collections of the authentic records of the nation, which some of the prophets (and the Jewish church was for many ages more or less continually blessed with such) were divinely directed and helped to put together for the service of the church to the end of the world; as their other officers, so their historiographers, had their authority *from heaven*.—It should seem that though the substance of the several histories was written when the events were fresh in memory, and written under a divine direction, yet, under the same direction, they were put into the form in which we now have them by some other hand, long afterwards, probably all by the same hand, or about the same time. The grounds of the conjecture are, 1. Because former writings are so often referred to, as the Book of Jasher (Jos. 10:13, and 2 Sa. 1:18), the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel and Judah, and the books of Gad, Nathan, and Iddo. 2. Because the days when the things were done are spoken of sometimes as days long since passed; as 1 Sa. 9:9, *He that is now called a prophet was formerly called a seer*. And, 3. Because we so often read of things remaining *unto this day*; as stones (Jos. 4:9; 7:26; 8:29; 10:27; 1 Sa. 6:18), names of places (Jos. 5:9; 7:26; Jdg. 1:26; 15:19; 18:12; 2 Ki. 14:7), rights and possessions (Jdg. 1:21; 1 Sa. 27:6), customs and usages (1 Sa. 5:5; 2 Ki. 17:41), which clauses have been since added to the history by the inspired collectors for the confirmation and illustration of it to those of their own age. And, if one may offer a mere conjecture, it is not unlikely that the historical books, to the end of the Kings, were put together by Jeremiah the prophet, a little before the captivity; for it is said of Ziklag (1 Sa. 27:6) that it pertains to the *kings of Judah* (which style began after Solomon and ended in the captivity) *unto this day*. And it is still more probable that those which follow were put together by Ezra the scribe, some time after the captivity. However, though we are in the dark concerning their authors, we are in no doubt concerning their authority; they were a part of the oracles of God, which were committed to the Jews, and were so received and referred to by our Saviour and the apostles.

In the five books of Moses we had a very full account of the rise, advance, and constitution, of the Old-Testament church, the family out of which it was raised, the promise, that great charter by which it was incorporated, the miracles by which it was built up, and the laws and ordinances by which it was to be governed, from which one would conceive and expectation of its character and state very different from what we find in this history. A nation that had statutes and judgments so righteous, one would think, should have been very holy; and a nation what had promises so rich should have been very happy. But, alas! a great part of the history is a melancholy representation of their sins and miseries; for *the law made nothing perfect*, but this was to be done by the *bringing in of the better hope*. And yet, if we compare the history of the Christian church with its

constitution, we shall find the same cause for wonder, so many have been its errors and corruptions; for neither does the *gospel make any thing perfect* in this world, but leaves us still in expectation of a *better hope* in the future state.

II. We have next before us the *book of Joshua*, so called, perhaps, not because it was written *by* him, for that is uncertain. Dr. Lightfoot thinks that Phinehas wrote it. Bishop Patrick is clear that Joshua wrote it himself. However that be, it is written *concerning* him, and, if any other wrote it, it was collected out of his journals or memoirs. It contains the history of Israel under the command and government of Joshua, how he presided as general of their armies, 1. In their entrance into Canaan, ch. 1-5. 2. In their conquest of Canaan, ch. 6-12. 3. In the distribution of the land of Canaan among the tribes of Israel, ch. 22-24. In all which he was a great example of wisdom, courage, fidelity, and piety, to all that are in places of public trust. But this is not all the use that is to be made of this history. We may see in it, 1. *Much of God and his providence*—his power in the kingdom of nature, his justice in punishing the Canaanites when the *measure of their iniquity was full*, his faithfulness to his covenant with the patriarchs, and his kindness to his people Israel, notwithstanding their provocations. We may see him as the Lord of Hosts *determining the issues of war*, and as the director of the lot, *determining the bounds of men's habitations*. 2. *Much of Christ and his grace*. Though Joshua is not expressly mentioned in the New Testament as a type of Christ, yet all agree that he was a very eminent one. He bore our Saviour's name, as did also another type of him, Joshua the high priest, Zec. 6:11, 12. The Septuagint, giving the name of Joshua a Greek termination, call him all along *Iesusous*, *Jesus*, and so he is called Acts 7:45, and Heb. 4:8. Justin Martyr, one of the first writers of the Christian church (*Dialog. cum Tryph. p. mihi 300*), makes that promise in Ex. 23:20, *My angel shall bring thee into the place I have prepared*, to point at Joshua; and these words, *My name is in him*, to refer to this, that his names should be the same with that of the Messiah. It signifies, *He shall save*. Joshua saves God's people from the Canaanites; our Lord Jesus saves them *from their sins*. Christ, as Joshua, is the *captain of our salvation*, a *leader and commander of the people*, to tread Satan under their feet, to put them in possession of the heavenly Canaan, and to *give them rest*, which (it is said, Heb. 4:8) Joshua did not.

Chapter 1

The book begins with the history, not of Joshua's life (many remarkable passages of that we had before in the books of Moses) but of his reign and government. In this chapter, I. God appoints him to the government in the stead of Moses, gives him an ample commission, full instructions, and great encouragements (v. 1-9). II. He accepts the government, and addresses himself immediately to the business of it, giving orders to the officers of the people in general (v. 10, 11) and particularly to the two tribes and a half (v. 12-15). III. The people agree to it, and take an oath of fealty to him (v. 16-18). A reign which thus began with God could not but be honourable to the prince and comfortable to the subject. The last words of Moses are still verified, "Happy art thou, O Israel! Who is like unto thee, O people?" Deu. 33:29.

Verses 1-9

Honour is here put upon Joshua, and great power lodged in his hand, by him that is the fountain of honour and power, and by whom kings reign. Instructions are given him by Infinite Wisdom, and encouragements by the God of all consolation. God had before spoken to Moses concerning him (Num. 27:18), but now he speaks to him (v. 1), probably as he spoke to Moses (Lev. 1:1) *out of the tabernacle of the congregation*, where Joshua had with Moses presented himself (Deu. 31:14), to learn the way of attending there. Though Eleazar had the breast-plate of judgment, which Joshua was directed to consult as there was occasion (Num. 27:21), yet, for his greater encouragement, God here speaks to him immediately, some think in a dream or vision (as Job 33:15); for though God has tied us to instituted ordinances, in them to attend him, yet he has not tied himself to them, but that he may without them make himself known to his people, and speak to their hearts otherwise than by their ears.

Concerning Joshua's call to the government observe here,

I. The time when it was given him: *After the death of Moses*. As soon as ever Moses was dead, Joshua took upon him the administration, by virtue of his solemn ordination in Moses's life-time. An interregnum, though but for a few days, might have been of bad consequence; but it is probable that God did not speak to him to go forward towards Canaan till after the thirty days of mourning for Moses were ended; not, as the Jews say, because the sadness of his spirit during those days unfitted him for communion with God (he sorrowed not as one that had no hope), but by this solemn pause, and a month's adjournment of the public councils, even now when time was so very precious to them, God would put an honour upon the memory of Moses, and give time to the people not only to lament their loss of him, but to repent of their miscarriages towards him during the forty years of his government.

II. The place Joshua had been in before he was thus preferred. He was Moses's minister, that is, an immediate attendant upon his person and assistant in business. The Septuagint translates it *hypourgos*, a workman under Moses, under his direction and command. Observe, 1. He that was here called to honour had been long bred to business. Our Lord Jesus himself took upon him the form of a servant, and then God highly exalted him. 2. He was trained up in subjection and under command. Those are fittest to rule that have learnt to obey. 3. He that was to succeed Moses was intimately acquainted with him, that he might *fully know his doctrine and manner of life, his purpose and long-suffering* (2 Tim. 3:10), might take the same measures, walk in the

same spirit, in the same steps, having to carry on the same work. 4. He was herein a type of Christ, who might therefore be called Moses's minister, because he was made under the law and fulfilled all the righteousness of it.

III. The call itself that God gave him, which is very full.

1. The consideration upon which he was called to the government: *Moses my servant is dead*, v. 2. All good men are God's servants; and it is no disparagement, but an honour, to the greatest of men to be so: angels themselves are his ministers. Moses was called to extraordinary work, was a steward in God's house, and in the discharge of the trusts reposed in him he served not himself but God who employed him; he was faithful as a servant, and with an eye to the Son, as is intimated, Heb. 3:5, where what he did is said to be for a *testimony of the things that should be spoken after*. God will own his servants, will confess them in the great day. But Moses, though God's servant, and one that could ill be spared, is dead; for God will change hands, to show that whatever instruments he uses he is not tied to any. Moses, when he has done his work as a servant, dies and goes to *rest from his labours, and enters into the joy of his Lord*. Observe, God takes notice of the death of his servants. It is precious in his sight, Ps. 116:15.

2. The call itself. *Now therefore arise*. (1.) "Though Moses is dead, the work must go on; therefore arise, and go about it." Let not weeping hinder sowing, nor the withering of the most useful hands be the weakening of ours; for, when God has work to do, he will either find or make instruments fit to carry it on. Moses the *servant* is dead, but God the *Master* is not: he lives for ever. (2.) "Because Moses is dead, therefore the work devolves upon thee as his successor, for hereunto thou wast appointed. Therefore there is need of thee to fill up his place; up, and be doing." Note, [1.] The removal of useful men should quicken survivors to be so much the more diligent in doing good. Such and such are dead, and we must die shortly, therefore let us work while it is day. [2.] It is a great mercy to a people, if, when useful men are taken away in the midst of their usefulness, others are raised up in their stead to go on where they broke off. Joshua must arise to finish what Moses began. Thus the latter generations enter into the labours of the former. And thus Christ, our Joshua, does that for us which could never be done by the law of Moses,—*justifies* (Acts 13:39), and *sanctifies*, Romans 8:3. The life of Moses made way for Joshua, and prepared the people for what was to be done by him. Thus the law is a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ: and then the death of Moses made room for Joshua; thus we are dead to the law, our first husband, that we may be *married to Christ*, Rom. 7:4.

3. The particular service he was now called out to: "*Arise, go over this Jordan*, this river which you have in view, and on the banks of which you lie encamped." This was a trial to the faith of Joshua, whether he would give orders to make preparation for passing the river when there was no visible way of getting over it, at least not at this place and at this time, when *all the banks were overflowed*, ch. 3:15. He had no pontoons or bridge of boats by which to convey them over, and yet he must believe that God, who had ordered them over, would open a way for them. Going over Jordan was going into Canaan; thither Moses might not, could not, bring them, Deu. 31:2. Thus the honour of bringing the many sons to glory is reserved for Christ the *captain of our salvation*, Heb. 2:10.

4. The grant of the land of Canaan to the children of Israel is here repeated (v. 2-4): *I do give it them*. To the patriarchs it was promised, *I will give it*; but, now that the fourth generation had expired, the iniquity of the Amorites was full, and the time had

come for the performance of the promise, it is actually conveyed, and they are put in possession of that which they had long been in expectation of: "I do give it, enter upon it, it is all your own; nay (v. 3), *I have given it*; though it be yet unconquered, it is as sure to you as if it were in your hands." Observe, (1.) The persons to whom the conveyance is made: *To them, even to the children of Israel* (v. 2), because they are the seed of Jacob, who was called *Israel* at the time when this promise was made to him, Gen. 35:10, 12. The children of Israel, though they had been very provoking in the wilderness, yet, for their fathers' sakes, should have the entail preserved. And it was the children of the murmurers that God said should enter Canaan, Num. 14:31. (2.) The land itself that is conveyed: From the river Euphrates eastward, to the Mediterranean Sea westward, v. 4. Though their sin cut them short of this large possession, and they never replenished all the country within the bounds here mentioned, yet, had they been obedient, God would have given them this and much more. Out of all these countries, and many others, there were in process of time proselytes to the Jewish religion, as appears, Acts 2:5, etc. If their church was enlarged, though their nation was not multiplied, it cannot be said that the promise was of no effect. And, if this promise had not its full accomplishment in the letter, believers might thence infer that it had a further meaning, and was to be fulfilled in the kingdom of the Messiah, both that of grace and that of glory. (3.) The condition is here implied upon which this grant is made, in those words, *as I said unto Moses*, that is, "upon the terms that Moses told you of many a time, *if you will keep my statutes*, you shall go in and possess that good land. Take it under those provisos and limitations, and not otherwise." The precept and promise must not be separated. (4.) It is intimated with what ease they should gain the possession of this land, if it were not their own fault, in these words, *"Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon* (within the following bounds) shall be your own. Do but set your foot upon it and you have it."

5. The promises God here makes to Joshua for his encouragement. (1.) That he should be sure of the presence of God with him in this great work to which he was called (v. 5): *"As I was with Moses*, to direct and strengthen him, to own and prosper him, and give him success in bringing Israel out of Egypt and leading them through the wilderness, so I will be with thee to enable thee to settle them in Canaan." Joshua was sensible how far he came short of Moses in wisdom and grace; But what Moses did was done by virtue of the presence of God with him, and, though Joshua had not always the same presence of mind that Moses had, yet, if he had always the same presence of God, he would do well enough. Note, it is a great comfort to the rising generation of ministers and Christians that the same grace which was sufficient for those that went before them shall not be wanting to them if they be not wanting to themselves in the improvement of it. It is repeated here again (v. 9). *"The Lord thy God is with thee* as a God of power, and that power engaged for thee whithersoever thou goest." Note, Those that go where God sends them shall have him with them wherever they go and they need desire no more to make them easy and prosperous. (2.) That the presence of God should never be withdrawn from him: *I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee*, v. 5. Moses had assured him of this (Deu. 31:8), that, though he must now leave him, God never would: and here God himself confirms that word of his servant Moses (Isa. 44:26), and engages never to leave Joshua. We need the presence of God, not only when we are beginning our work to set us in, but in the progress of it to further us with a continual help. If that at any time fail us, we are gone; this we may be sure, that *the Lord is with us while we are with him*. This promise here made to Joshua is applied to all

believers, and improved as an argument against covetousness, Heb. 13:5, *Be content with such things as you have, for he hath said, I will never leave thee.* (3.) That he should have victory over all the enemies of Israel (v. 5): *There shall not any man that comes against thee be able to stand before thee.* Note, There is no standing before those that have God on their side. *If he be for us, who can be against us?* God promises him clear success—the enemy should not make any head against him; and constant success—all the days of his life. However it might be with Israel when he was gone, all his reign should be graced with triumphs. What Joshua had himself encouraged the people with long ago (Num. 14:9) God here encourages him with. (4.) That he should himself have the dividing of this land among the people of Israel, v. 6. It was a great encouragement to him in beginning this work that he was sure to see it finished and his labour should not be in vain. Some make it a reason why he should arm himself with resolution, and be of good courage, because of the bad character of the people whom he must cause to inherit that land. He knew well what a froward discontented people they were, and how unmanageable they had been in his predecessor's time; let him therefore expect vexation from them and be of good courage.

6. The charge or command he gives to Joshua, which is,

(1.) That he conform himself in every thing to the law of God, and make this his rule v. 7, 8. God does, as it were, put the book of the law into Joshua's hand; as, when Joash was crowned, they *gave him the testimony*, 2 Ki. 11:12. And concerning this book he is charged, [1.] *To meditate therein day and night*, that he might understand it and have it ready in him upon all occasions. If ever any man's business might have excused him from meditation, and other acts of devotion, one would think Joshua's might at this time. It was a great trust that was lodged in his hands; the care of it was enough to fill him, if he had had ten souls, and yet he must find time and thoughts for meditation. Whatever affairs of this world we have to mind, we must not neglect the one thing needful. [5.] Not to let it depart out of his mouth; that is, all his orders to the people, and his judgments upon appeals made to him, must be consonant to the law of God; upon all occasions he must *speak according to this rule*, Isa. 8:20. Joshua was to maintain and carry on the work that Moses had begun, and therefore he must not only complete the salvation Moses had wrought for them, but must uphold the holy religion he had established among them. There was no occasion to make new laws; but *that good thing which was committed to him* he must carefully and faithfully keep, 2 Tim. 1:14. [3.] He must *observe to do according to all this law*. To this end he must meditate therein, not for contemplation sake only, or to fill his head with notions, or that he might find something to puzzle the priests with, but that he might, both as a man and as a magistrate, observe to do *according to what was written* therein; and several things were written there which had particular reference to the business he had now before him, as the laws concerning their wars, the destroying of the Canaanites and the dividing of Canaan; etc.; these he must religiously observe. Joshua was a man of great power and authority, yet he must himself be under command and do as he is bidden. No man's dignity or dominion, how great soever, sets him above the law of God. Joshua must not only govern by law, and take care that the people observed the law, but he must observe it himself, and so by his own example maintain the honour and power of it. *First*, He must do what was written. It is not enough to hear and read the word, to commend and admire it, to know and remember it, to talk and discourse of it, but we must do it. *Secondly*, He must do according to what was written, exactly observing the law as his copy, and doing, not only that which was

there required, but in all circumstances according to the appointment. *Thirdly*, He must do according to all that was written, without exception or reserve, having a *respect to all God's commandments*, even those which are most displeasing to flesh and blood. *Fourthly*, He must observe to do so, observe the checks of conscience, the hints of providence; and all the advantages of opportunity. Careful observance is necessary to universal obedience. *Fifthly*, He must *not turn from it*, either in his own practice or in any act of government, to the right hand or to the left, for there are errors on both hands, and virtue is in the mean. *Sixthly*, He must be *strong and courageous*, that he might do according to the law. So many discouragements there are in the way of duty that those who will proceed and persevere in it must put on resolution. And, *lastly*, to encourage him in his obedience, he assures him that then he shall *do wisely* (as it is in the margin) and *make his way prosperous*, v. 7, 8. Those that make the word of God their rule, and conscientiously walk by that rule, shall both do well and speed well; it will furnish them with the best maxims by which to order their conversation (Ps. 111:10); and it will entitle them to the best blessings: God shall *give them the desire of their heart*.

(2.) That he encourage himself herein with the promise and presence of God, and make these his stay (v. 6): *Be strong and of a good courage*. And again (v. 7), as if this was the one thing needful: *Only be strong and very courageous*. And he concludes with this (v. 9): *Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed*. Joshua had long since signalized his valour, in the war with Amalek, and in his dissent from the report of the evil spies; and yet God sees fit thus to inculcate this precept upon him. Those that have grace have need to be called upon again and again to exercise grace and to improve in it. Joshua was humble and low in his own eyes, not distrustful of God, and his power, and promise, but diffident of himself, and of his own wisdom, and strength, and sufficiency for the work, especially coming after so great a man as Moses; and therefore God repeats this so often, *"Be strong and of a good courage; let not the sense of thy own infirmities dishearten thee; God is all-sufficient. Have not I commanded thee?"* [1.] "I have commanded the work to be done, and therefore it shall be done, how invincible soever the difficulties may seem that lie in the way." Nay, [2.] "I have commanded, called, and commissioned, thee to do it, and therefore will be sure to own thee, and strengthen thee, and bear thee out in it." Note, When we are in the way of our duty we have reason to be strong and very courageous; and it will help very much to animate and embolden us if we keep our eye upon the divine warrant, hear God saying, *"Have not I commanded thee? I will therefore help thee, succeed thee, accept thee, reward thee."* Our Lord Jesus, as Joshua here, was borne up under his sufferings by a regard to the will of God and the *commandment he had received from his Father*, Jn. 10:18.

Verses 10-15

Joshua, being settled in the government, immediately applies himself to business; not to take state or to take his pleasure, but to further the work of God among the people over whom God had set him. As he that desires the office of a minister (1 Tim. 3:1), so he that desires the office of a magistrate, desires a work, a good work; neither is preferred to be idle.

I. He issues out orders to the people to provide for a march; and they had been so long encamped in their present post that it would be a work of some difficulty to decamp. The officers of the people that commanded under Joshua in their respective tribes and families attended him for orders, which they were to transmit to the people. Inferior magistrates are as necessary and

as serviceable to the public good in their places as the supreme magistrate in his. What could Joshua have done without officers? We are therefore required to be subject, not only to *the king as supreme, but to governors as to those that are sent by him*, 1 Pt. 2:13, 14. By these officers, 1. Joshua gives public notice that they were to *pass over Jordan within three days*. These orders, I suppose, were not given till after the return of the spies that were sent to bring an account of Jericho, though the story of that affair follows, ch. 2. And perhaps that was such an instance of his jealousy, and excessive caution, as made it necessary that he should be so often bidden as he was to be strong and of a good courage. Observe with what assurance Joshua says to the people, because God had said it to him, *You shall pass over Jordan, and shall possess the land*. We greatly honour the truth of God. 2. He gives them directions to prepare victuals, not to prepare transport vessels. He that bore Egypt upon eagle's wings would in like manner bear them into Canaan, to bring them to himself, Ex. 19:4. But those that were desirous to have other victuals besides the manna, which had not yet ceased, must prepare it and have it ready against the time appointed. Perhaps, though the manna did not quite cease till they came into Canaan (ch. 5:12), yet since they had come *into a land inhabited* (Ex. 16:35), where they might be furnished in part with other provisions, it did not fall so plentifully, nor did they gather so much as when they had it first given to them in the wilderness, but decreased gradually, and therefore they are ordered to provide other victuals, in which perhaps was included all other things necessary to their march. And some of the Jewish writer, considering that having manna they needed not to provide other victuals, understand it figuratively, that they must *repent of their sins*, and make their *peace with God*, and resolve to live a new life, that they might be ready to receive this great favour. See Ex. 19:10, 11.

II. He reminds the two tribes and a half of the obligations they were under to go over Jordan with their brethren, though they left their possessions and families on this side. Interest would make the other tribes glad to go over Jordan, but in these it was an act of self-denial, and against the grain; therefore it was needful to produce the agreement which Moses had made with them, when he gave them their possession before their brethren (v. 13): *Remember the word which Moses commanded you*. Some of them perhaps were ready to think now that Moses was dead, who they thought was too hard upon them in this matter, they might find some excuse or other to release themselves from this engagement, or might prevail with Joshua to dispense with them; but he holds them to it, and lets them know that, though Moses was dead, his commands and their promises were still in full force. He reminds them, 1. Of the advantages they had received in being first settled: *"The Lord your God hath given you rest*. He has given your minds rest; you know what you have to trust to, and are not as the rest of the tribes waiting the issue of the war first and then of the lot. He has also given your families rest, your wives and children, whose settlement is your satisfaction. He has given you rest by giving you this land, this good land, of which you are in full and quiet possession."

Note, When God by his providence has given us rest we ought to consider how we may honour him with the advantages of it, and what service we may do to our brethren who are unsettled, or not so well settled as we are. When God had given David rest (2 Sa. 7:1), see how restless he was till he had *found out a habitation* for the ark, Ps. 132:4, 5. When God has given us rest, we must take heed of slothfulness and of settling upon our lees. 2. He reminds them of their agreement to help their brethren in the wars of Canaan till God had in like manner given them rest, v. 14, 15. This was, (1.) Reasonable in itself. So closely were all

the tribes incorporated that they must needs look upon themselves as members one of another. (2.) It was enjoined them by Moses, the servant of the Lord; he commanded them to do this, and Joshua his successor would see his commands observed. (3.) It was the only expedient they had to save themselves from the guilt of a great sin in settling on that side Jordan, a sin which would one time or other find them out, Num. 32:23. (4.) It was the condition of the grant Moses had made them of the land they were possessed of, so that they could not be sure of a good title to, or a comfortable enjoyment of, *the land of their possession*, as it is here called (v. 15), if they did not fulfil the condition. (5.) They themselves had covenanted and agreed thereunto (Num. 32:25): *Thy servants will do as my Lord commandeth*. Thus we all lie under manifold obligations to strengthen the hands one of another, and not to seek our own welfare only, but one another's.

Verses 16-18

This answer was given not by the two tribes and a half only (though they are spoken of immediately before), but by the *officers of all the people* (v. 10), as their representatives, concurring with the divine appointment, by which Joshua was set over them, and they did it heartily, and with a great deal of cheerfulness and resolution.

I. They promise him obedience (v. 16), not only as subjects to their prince, but as soldiers to their general, of whose particular orders they are to be observant. He that hath *soldiers under him saith to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh*, Mt. 8:9. Thus the people of Joshua; *"All that thou commandest us we will readily do*, without murmuring or disputing; and whithersoever thou sends us, though upon the most difficult and perilous expedition, we will go." We must thus swear allegiance to our Lord Jesus, as the captain of our salvation, and bind ourselves to do what he commands us by his word, and to go where he sends us by his providence. And since Joshua, being humbly conscious to himself how far short he came of Moses, feared he should not have such an influence upon the people and such an interest in them as Moses had, they here promise that they will be as obedient to him as ever they had been to Moses, v. 17. To speak truth, they had no reason to boast of their obedience to Moses; he had found them a stiff-necked people, Deu. 9:24. But they meant that they would be as observant of Joshua as they should have been, and as some of them were (and the generality of them at least sometimes) of Moses. Note, We must not so magnify those that are gone, how eminent soever they were, either in the magistracy or in the ministry, as to be wanting in the honour and duty we owe to those that survive and succeed them, though in gifts they may come short of them. Obedience for conscience' sake will continue, though Providence change the hands by which it rules and acts.

II. They pray for the presence of God with him (v. 17): *"Only the Lord thy God be with thee*, to bless and prosper thee, and give thee success, *as he was with Moses.*" Prayers and supplications are to be made for all in authority, 1 Tim. 2:1, 2. And the best thing we can ask of God for our magistrates is that they may have the presence of God with them; this will make them blessings to us, so that in seeking this for them we consult our own interest. A reason is here intimated why they would obey him as they had obeyed Moses, because they believed (and in faith prayed) that God's presence would be with him as it was with Moses. Those that we have reason to think have favour from God should have honour and respect from us. Some understand it as a limitation of their obedience: "We will obey only as far as we perceive the Lord is with thee, but no further.

while thou keepest close to God we will keep close to thee; hitherto shall our obedience come, but no further." But they were so far from having any suspicion of Joshua's deviating from the divine rule that there needed not such a proviso.

III. They pass an act to make it death for any Israelite to disobey Joshua's orders, or *rebel against his commandment*, v. 18.

Perhaps if such a law had been made in Moses's time it might have prevented many of the rebellions that were formed against him; for most men fear the sword of the magistrate more than the justice of God. Yet there was a special reason for the making of this law now that they were entering upon the wars of Canaan; for in times of war the severity of military discipline is more necessary than at other times. Some think that in this statute they had an eye to that law concerning the prophet God would raise up like unto Moses, which they think, though it refer chiefly to Christ, yet takes in Joshua by the way as a type of him, that whosoever would not hearken to him should be *cut off from his people*. Deu. 18:19, *I will require it of him*.

IV. They animate him to go on with cheerfulness in the work to which God had called him; and, in desiring that he would be strong and of a good courage, they did in effect promise him that they would do all they could, by an exact, bold, and cheerful observance of all his orders, to encourage him. It very much heartens those that lead in a good work to see those that follow follow with a good will. Joshua, though of approved valour, did not take it as an affront, but as a great kindness, for the people to bid him be strong and of a good courage.

Chapter 2

In this chapter we have an account of the scouts that were employed to bring an account to Joshua of the posture of the city of Jericho. Observe here, I. How Joshua sent them (v. 1). II. How Rahab received them, and protected them, and told a lie for them (v. 2-7), so that they escaped out of the hands of the enemy. III. The account she gave them of the present posture of Jericho, and the panic-fear they were struck with upon the approach of Israel (v. 8-11). IV. The bargain she made with them for the security of herself and her relations in the ruin she saw coming upon her city (v. 12-21). V. Their safe return to Joshua, and the account they gave him of their expedition (v. 22-24). And that which makes this story most remarkable is that Rahab, the person principally concerned in it, is twice celebrated in the New Testament as a great believer (Heb. 11:31) and as one whose faith proved itself by good works, James 2:25.

Verses 1-7

In these verses we have,

I. The prudence of Joshua, in sending spies to observe this important pass, which was likely to be disputed at the entrance of Israel into Canaan (v. 1). Go *view the land, even Jericho*. Moses had sent spies (Num. 13) Joshua himself was one of them and it proved of ill consequence. Yet Joshua now sent spies, not, as the former were sent, to survey the whole land, but Jericho only; not to bring the account to the whole congregation, but to Joshua only, who, like a watchful general, was continually projecting for the public good, and, was particularly careful to take the first step well and not to stumble at the threshold. It was not fit that Joshua should venture over Jordan, to make his remarks *incognito—in disguise*; but he sends two men (two young men, says the Septuagint), to view the land, that from their report he might take his measures in attacking Jericho. Observe, 1. There is no remedy, but great men must see with other people's eyes, which makes it very necessary that they be cautious in the choice of those they employ, since so much often depends upon their fidelity. 2. Faith in God's promise ought not to supersede but encourage our diligence in the use of proper means. Joshua is sure he has God with him, and yet sends men before him. We do not trust God, but tempt him, if our expectations slacken our endeavours. 3. See how ready these men were to go upon this hazardous enterprise. Though they put their lives in their hands yet they ventured in obedience to Joshua their general, in zeal for the service of the camp, and in dependence upon the power of that God who, being the keeper of Israel in general, is the protector of every particular Israelite in the way of his duty.

II. The providence of God directing the spies to the house of Rahab. How they got over Jordan we are not told; but into Jericho they came, which was about seven or eight miles from the river, and there seeking for a convenient inn were directed to the house of Rahab, here called a *harlot*, a woman that had formerly been of ill fame, the reproach of which stuck to her name, though of late she had repented and reformed. Simon the leper (Mt. 26:6), though cleansed from his leprosy, wore the reproach of it in his name at long as he lived; so Rahab the harlot; and she is so called in the New Testament, where both her faith and her good works are praised, to teach us, 1. That the greatness of sin is no bar to pardoning mercy if it be truly repented of in time. We read of publicans and harlots entering into the kingdom of the Messiah, and being welcomed to all the privileged of

that kingdom, Mt. 21:31. 2. That there are many who before their conversion were very wicked and vile, and yet afterwards come to great eminence in faith and holiness. 3. Even those that through grace have repented of the sins of their youth must expect to bear the reproach of them, and when they hear of their old faults must renew their repentance, and, as an evidence of that, hear of them patiently. God's Israel, for aught that appears, had but one friend, but one well-wisher in all Jericho, and that was Rahab a harlot. God has often served his own purposes and his church's interests by men of different morals. Had these scouts gone to any other house than this they would certainly have been betrayed and put to death without mercy. But God knew where they had a friend that would be true to them, though they did not, and directed them thither. Thus that which seems to us most contingent and accidental is often over-ruled by the divine providence to serve its great ends. And those that faithfully acknowledge God in their ways he will *guide with his eye*. See Jer. 36:19, 26.

III. The piety of Rahab in receiving and protecting these Israelites. Those that keep public-houses entertain all comers, and think themselves obliged to be civil to their guests. But Rahab showed her guests more than common civility, and went upon an uncommon principle in what she did; it was *by faith* that she received those with peace against whom her king and country had denounced war, Heb. 11:31. 1. She bade them welcome to her house; they lodged there, though it appears by what she said to them (v. 9) she knew both whence they came and what their business was. 2. Perceiving that they were observed coming into the city, and that umbrage was taken at it, she hid them upon the roof of the house, which was flat, and covered them with stalks of flax (v. 6), so that, if the officers should come thither to search for them, there they might lie undiscovered. By these stalks of flax, which she herself had lain in order upon the roof to dry in the sun, in order to the beating of it and making it ready for the wheel, it appears she had one of the good characters of the virtuous woman, however in others of them she might be deficient, that she *sought wool and flax, and wrought willingly with her hands*, Prov. 31:13. From this instance of her honest industry one would hope that, whatever she had been formerly, she was not now a harlot. 3. When she was examined concerning them, she denied they were in her house, turned off the officers that had a warrant to search for them with a sham, and so secured them. No marvel that the king of Jericho sent to enquire after them (v. 2, 3); he had cause to fear when the enemy was at his door, and his fear made him suspicious and jealous of all strangers. He had reason to demand from Rahab that she should *bring forth the men* to be dealt with as spies; but Rahab not only disowned that she knew them, or knew where they were, but, that no further search might be made for them in the city, told the pursuers they had gone away again and in all probability might be overtaken, v. 4, 5. Now, (1.) We are sure this was a good work: it is canonized by the apostle (James 2:25), where she is said to be *justified by works*, and this is specified, that *she received the messengers, and sent them out another way*, and she did it by faith, such a faith as set her above the fear of man, even of the wrath of the king. She believed, upon the report she had heard of the wonders wrought for Israel, that their God was the only true God, and that therefore their declared design upon Canaan would undoubtedly take effect and in this faith she sided with them, protected them, and courted their favour. Had she said, "I believe God is yours and Canaan yours, but I dare not show you any kindness," her faith had been dead and inactive, and would not have justified her. But by this it appeared to be both alive and lively, that she exposed herself to the utmost peril, even of life, in obedience to her faith. Note, Those only are true believers that can find in their hearts to

venture for God; and those that by faith take the Lord for their God take his people for their people, and cast in their lot among them. Those that have God for their refuge and hiding-place must testify their gratitude by their readiness to shelter his people when there is occasion. *Let my outcasts dwell with thee*, Isa. 16:3, 4. And we must be glad of an opportunity of testifying the sincerity and zeal of our love to God by hazardous services to his church and kingdom among men. But, (2.) There is that in it which it is not easy to justify, and yet it must be justified, or else it could not be so good a work as to justify her. [1.] It is plain that she betrayed her country by harbouring the enemies of it, and aiding those that were designing its destruction, which could not consist with her allegiance to her prince and her affection and duty to the community she was a member of. But that which justifies her in this is that *she knew the Lord had given Israel this land* (v. 9), knew it by the incontestable miracles God had wrought for them, which confirmed that grant; and her obligations to God were higher than her obligations to any other. If she knew *God had given them this land*, it would have been a sin to join with those that hindered them from possessing it. But, since no such grant of any land to any people can now be proved, this will by no means justify any such treacherous practices against the public welfare. [2.] It is plain that she deceived the officers that examined her with an untruth—That she knew not whence the men were, that they had gone out, that she knew not whither they had gone. What shall we say to this? If she had either told the truth or been silent, she would have betrayed the spies, and this would certainly have been a great sin; and it does not appear that she had any other way of concealing them that by this ironical direction to the officers to pursue them another way, which if they would suffer themselves to be deceived by, let them be deceived. None are bound to accuse themselves, or their friends, of that which, though enquired after as a crime, they know to be a virtue. This case was altogether extraordinary, and therefore cannot be drawn into a precedent; and that my be justified here which would be by no means lawful in a common case. Rahab knew, by what was already done on the other side Jordan, that no mercy was to be shown to the Canaanites, and thence inferred that, if mercy was not owing them, truth was not; those that might be destroyed might be deceived. Yet divines generally conceive that it was a sin, which however admitted of this extenuation, that being a Canaanite she was not better taught the evil of lying; but God accepted her faith and pardoned her infirmity. However it was in this case, we are sure it is our duty to speak every man the truth to his neighbour, to dread and detest lying, and never to *do evil, that evil, that good may come of it*, Rom. 3:8. But God accepts what is sincerely and honestly intended, though there be a mixture of frailty and folly in it, and is not extreme to mark what we do amiss. Some suggest that what she said might possibly be true of some other men.

Verses 8-21

The matter is here settled between Rahab and the spies respecting the service she was now to do for them, and the favour they were afterwards to show to her. She secures them on condition that they should secure her.

I. She gives them, and by them sends to Joshua and Israel, all the encouragement that could be desired to make their intended descent upon Canaan. this was what they came for, and it was worth coming for. Having got clear of the officers, she comes up to them to the *roof of the house* where they lay hid, finds them perhaps somewhat dismayed at the peril they apprehended themselves in from the officers, and scarcely recovered from the fright, but has that to say to them which will give them

abundant satisfaction. 1. She lets them know that the report of the great things God had done for them had come to Jericho (v. 10), not only that they had an account of their late victories obtained over the Amorites in the neighbouring country, on the other side of the river, but that their miraculous deliverance out of Egypt, and passage through the Red Sea, a great way off, and forty years ago, were remembered and talked of afresh in Jericho, to the amazement of every body. Thus *this* Joshua and his fellows were *men wondered at*, Zec. 3:8. See how God *makes his wonderful works to be remembered* (Ps. 111:4), so that *men shall speak of the might of his terrible acts*, Ps. 145:6. 2. She tells them what impressions the tidings of these things had made upon the Canaanites: *Your terror has fallen upon us* (v. 9); *our hearts did melt*, v. 11. If she kept a public house, this would give her an opportunity of understanding the sense of various companies and of travellers from other parts of the country, so that they could not know this any way better than by her information; and it would be of great use to Joshua and Israel to know it; it would put courage into the most cowardly Israelite to hear how their enemies were dispirited, and it was easy to conclude that those who now fainted before them would infallibly fall before them, especially because it was the accomplishment of a promise God had made them, that he would *lay the fear and dread of them upon all this land* (Deu. 11:25), and so it would be an earnest of the accomplishment of all the other promises God had made to them. Let not the stout man glory in his courage, any more than the strong man in his strength; for God can weaken both mind and body. Let not God's Israel be afraid of their most powerful enemies; for their God can, when he pleases, make their most powerful enemies afraid of them. Let none think to harden their hearts against God and prosper; for he that made man's soul can at any time make the sword of his terrors approach to it. 3. She hereupon makes profession of her faith in God and his promise; and perhaps *there was not found so great faith* (all things considered), *no, not in Israel*, as in this woman of Canaan. (1.) who believes God's power and dominion over all the world (v. 11): "Jehovah your God, whom you worship and call upon, is so far above all gods that he is the only true God; for *he is God in heaven above and in earth beneath*, and is served by all the hosts of both." A vast distance there is between heaven and earth, yet both are equally under the inspection and government of the great Jehovah. Heaven is not above his power, nor is earth below his cognizance. (2.) She believes his promise to his people Israel (v. 9): *I know that the Lord hath given you the land*. The king of Jericho had heard as much as she had of the great things God had done for Israel, yet he cannot infer thence that the Lord had given them this land, but resolves to hold it out against them to the last extremity; for the most powerful means of conviction will not of themselves attain the end without divine grace, and by that grace Rahab the harlot, who had only heard of the wonders God had wrought, speaks with more assurance of the truth of the promise made to the fathers than all the elders of Israel had done who were eye-witnesses of those wonders, many of whom perished through unbelief of this promise. *Blessed are those that have not seen, and yet have believed*; so Rahab did. *O woman, great is thy faith!*

II. She engaged them to take her and her relations under their protection, that they might not perish in the destruction of Jericho, v. 12, 13. Now, 1. It was an evidence of the sincerity and strength of her faith concerning the approaching revolution in her country that she was so solicitous to make an interest for herself with the Israelites, and courted their kindness. She foresaw the conquest of her country, and in the belief of that bespoke in time the favour of the conquerors. Thus Noah, being

moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house, and the condemning of the world, Heb. 11:7. Those who truly believe the divine revelation concerning the ruin of sinners, and the grant of the heavenly land to God's Israel, will give diligence to flee from the wrath to come, and to lay hold of eternal life, by joining themselves to God and to his people. 2. The provision she made for the safety of her relations, as well as for her own, is a laudable instance of natural affection, and an intimation to us in like manner to do all we can for the salvation of the souls of those that are dear to us, and, with ourselves, to bring them, if possible, into the bond of the covenant. No mention is made of her husband and children, but only her parents, and brothers, and sisters, for whom, though she was herself a housekeeper, she retained a due concern. 3. Her request that they would swear unto her by Jehovah is an instance of her acquaintance with the only true God, and her faith in him and devotion towards him, one act of which is religiously to *swear by his name*. 4. Her petition is very just and reasonable, that, since she had protected them, they should protect her, and since her kindness to them extended to their people, for whom they were now negotiating, their kindness to her should take in all hers. It was the least they could do for one that had saved their lives with the hazard of her own. Note, Those that show mercy may expect to find mercy. Observe, She does not demand any preferment by way of reward for her kindness to them, though they lay so much at her mercy that she might have made her own terms, but only indents for her Life, which in a general destruction would be a singular favour. Thus God promised Ebed-Melech, in recompence for his kindness to Jeremiah, that in the worst of times he should have *his life for a prey*, Jer. 39:18. Yet this Rahab was afterwards advanced to be a princess in Israel, the wife of Salmon, and one of the ancestors of Christ, Mt. 1:5. Those that faithfully serve Christ and suffer for him he will not only protect, but prefer, and will do for them *more than they are able to ask or think*.

III. They solemnly engaged for her preservation in the common destruction (v. 14): "*Our life for yours*. We will take as much care of your lives as of our own, and would as soon hurt ourselves as any of you." Nay, they imprecate God's judgments on themselves if they should violate their promise to her. She had pawned her life for theirs, and now they in requital pawn their lives for hers, and (as public persons) with them they pawn the public faith and the credit of their nation, for they plainly interest all Israel in the engagement in those words, *When the Lord has given us the land*, meaning not themselves only, but the people whose agents they were. No doubt they knew themselves sufficiently authorized to treat with Rahab concerning this matter, and were confident that Joshua would ratify what they did, else they had not dealt honestly; the general law that they should make no covenant with the Canaanites (Deu. 7:2) did not forbid them to take under their protection a particular person, that had heartily come into their interests and had done them real kindnesses. The law of gratitude is one of the laws of nature. Now observe here, 1. The promises they made her. In general, "*We will deal kindly and truly with thee*, v. 14. We will not only be kind in promising now, but true in performing what we promise; and not only true in performing just what we promise, but kind in out-doing thy demands and expectations." The goodness of God is often expressed by his kindness and truth (Ps. 117:2), and in both these we must be followers of him. In particular, "*If a hand be upon any in the house with thee, his blood shall be on our head*," v. 19. If hurt come through our carelessness to those whom we are obliged to protect, we thereby contract guilt, and blood will be found a heavy load. 2. The provisos and limitations of their promises. Though they were in

haste, and it may be in some confusion, yet we find them very cautious in settling this agreement and the terms of it, not to bind themselves to more than was fit for them to perform. Note, Covenants must be made with care, and we must swear in judgment, lest we find ourselves perplexed and entangled when it is too late *after vows to make enquiry*. Those that will be conscientious in keeping their promises will be cautious in making them, and perhaps may insert conditions which others may think frivolous. Their promise is here accompanied with three provisos, and they were necessary ones. They will protect Rahab, and all her relations always, provided, (1.) That she tie the scarlet cord with which she was now about to let them down in the window of her house, v. 18. This was to be a mark upon the house, which the spies would take care to give notice of to the camp of Israel, that no soldier, how hot and eager soever he was in military executions, might offer any violence to the house that was thus distinguished. This was like the blood sprinkled upon the door-post, which secured the first-born from the destroying angel, and, being of the same colour, some allude to this also to represent the safety of believers under the protection of the blood of Christ sprinkled on the conscience. The same cord that she made use of for the preservation of these Israelites was to be made use of for her preservation. What we serve and honour God with we may expect he will bless and make comfortable to us. (2.) That she should have all those whose safety she had desired in the house with her and keep them there, and that, at the time of taking the town, none of them should dare to stir out of doors, v. 18, 19. This was a *necessary* proviso, for Rahab's kindred could not be distinguished any other way than by being in her distinguished house; should they mingle with their neighbours, there was no remedy, but the sword would devour *one as well as another*. It was a *reasonable* proviso that, since they were saved purely for Rahab's sake, her house should have the honour of being their castle, and that, if they would not *perish with those that believed not*, they should thus far believe the certainty and severity of the ruin coming upon their city as to retire into a place made safe by promise, as Noah into the ark and Lot into Zoar, and should *save themselves from this untoward generation*, by separating from them. It was likewise a *significant* proviso, intimating to us that those who are added to the church that they may be saved must keep close to the society of the faithful, and, having *escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust*, must take heed of being again entangled therein. (3.) That she should keep counsel (v. 14, 20): *If thou utter this our business*, that is, "If thou betray us when we are gone, or if thou make this agreement public, so as that others tie scarlet lines in their windows and so confound us, then we will be clear of thy oath." Those are unworthy of *the secret of the Lord* that know now how to keep it to themselves when there is occasion.

IV. She then took effectual care to secure her new friends, and *sent them out another way*, James 2:25. Having fully understood the bargain they made with her, and consented to it (v. 21), she then *let them down by a cord* over the city wall (v. 15), the situation of her house befriending them herein: thus Paul made his escape out of Damascus, 2 Co. 11:33. She also directed them which way to go for their own safety, being better acquainted with the country than they were, v. 16. she directs them to leave the high road, and abscond in the mountains till the pursuers returned, for till then they could not safely venture over Jordan. those that are in the way of God and their duty may expect that Providence will protect them, but this will not excuse them from taking all prudent methods for their own safety. God will keep us, but then we must not wilfully expose ourselves. Providence must be trusted, but not tempted. Calvin thinks that their charge to Rahab to keep this matter secret, and

not to utter it, was intended for her safety, lest she, boasting of her security from the sword of Israel, should, before they came to protect her, fall into the hands of the king of Jericho and be put to death for treason: thus do they prudently advise her for her safety, as she advised them for theirs. And it is good advice, which we should at any time be thankful for, to *take heed to ourselves*.

Verses 22-24

We have here the safe return of the spies Joshua had sent, and the great encouragement they brought with them to Israel to proceed in their descent upon Canaan. Had they been disposed to discourage the people, as the evil spies did that Moses sent, they might have told them what they had observed of the height and strength of the walls of Jericho, and the extraordinary vigilance of the king of Jericho, and how narrowly they escaped out of his hands; but they were of another spirit, and, depending themselves upon the divine promise, they animated Joshua likewise. 1. Their return in safety was itself an encouragement to Joshua, and a token for good. that God provided for them so good a friend as Rahab was in an enemy's country, and that notwithstanding the rage of the king of Jericho and the eagerness of the pursuers they had come back in peace, was such an instance of God's great care concerning them for Israel's sake as might assure the people of the divine guidance and care they were under, which should undoubtedly make the progress of their arms glorious. He that so wonderfully protected their scouts would preserve their men of war, and cover their heads in the day of battle. 2. The report they brought was much more encouraging (v. 24): "*All the inhabitants of the country, though resolved to stand it out, yet do faint because of us, they have neither wisdom to yield nor courage to fight,*" whence they conclude, "*Truly the Lord has delivered into our hands all the land, it is all our own; we have nothing to do, in effect, but to take possession.*" Sinners' frights are sometimes sure presages of their fall. If we resist our spiritual enemies they will flee before us, which will encourage us to hope that in due time we shall be more than conquerors.

Chapter 3

This chapter, and that which follows it, give us the history of Israel's passing through Jordan into Canaan, and a very memorable history it is. Long afterwards, they are told to remember what God did for them between Shittim (whence they decamped, v. 1). and Gilgal, where they next pitched, ch. 4:19, Mic. 6:5, that they might know the righteousness of the Lord. By Joshua's order they marched up to the river's side (v. 1), and then almighty power led them through it. They passed through the Red Sea unexpectedly, and in their flight by night, but they have notice some time before of their passing through Jordan, and their expectations raised. I. The people are directed to follow the ark (v. 2-4). II. They are commanded to sanctify themselves (v. 5). III. The priests with the ark are ordered to lead the van (v. 6). IV. Joshua is magnified and made commander in chief (v. 7, 8). V. Public notice is given of what God is about to do for them (v. 9-13). IV. The thing is done, Jordan is divided, and Israel brought safely through it (v. 14-17). This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.

Verses 1-6

Rahab, in mentioning to the spies the *drying up of the Red Sea* (ch. 2:10), the report of which terrified the Canaanites more than anything else, intimates that those on that side the water expected that Jordan, that great defence of their country, would in like manner give way to them. Whether the Israelites had any expectation of it does not appear. God often *did things for them which they looked not for*, Isa. 64:3. Now here we are told,

I. That they *came to Jordan and lodged there*, v. 1. Though they were not yet told how they should pass the river, and were unprovided for the passing of it in any ordinary way, yet they went forward in faith, having been told (ch. 1:11) that they should pass it. We must go on in the way of our duty though we foresee difficulties, trusting God to help us through them when we come to them. Let us proceed as far as we can, and depend on divine sufficiency for that which we find ourselves not sufficient for. In this march Joshua led them, and particular notice is taken of his early rising as there is afterwards upon other occasions (ch. 6:12; 7:16; 8:10), which intimates how little he loved his ease, how much he loved his business, and what care and pains he was willing to take in it. Those that would bring great things to pass must rise early. *Love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty*. Joshua herein set a good example to the officers under him, and taught them to rise early, and to all that are in public stations especially to attend continually to the duty of their place.

II. That the people were directed to follow the ark. Officers were appointed to go through the host to give these directions (v. 2), that every Israelite might know both what to do and what to depend upon.

1. They might depend upon the ark to lead them; that is, upon God himself, of whose presence the ark was an instituted sign and token. It seems, the pillar of cloud and fire was removed, else that would have led them, unless we suppose that it now hovered over the ark and so they had a double guide: honour was put upon the ark, and a defence upon that glory. It is called here the *ark of the covenant of the Lord their God*. What greater encouragement could they have than this, that the Lord was their God, a God in covenant with them? Here was the *ark of the covenant*; if God be ours, we need not fear any evil. He was nigh to them, present with them, went before them: what could come amiss to those that were thus guided, thus guarded?

Formerly the ark was carried in the midst of the camp, but now it went before them to *search out a resting-place* for them (Num. 10:33), and, as it were, to give them livery and seisin of the promised land, and put them in possession of it. In the ark the tables of the law were, and over it the mercy-seat; for the divine law and grace reigning in the heart are the surest pledges of God's presence and favour, and those that would be led to the heavenly Canaan must take the law of God for their guide (*if thou wilt enter into life keep the commandments*) and have the great propitiation in their eye, *looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life*.

2. They might depend upon the priests and Levites, who were appointed for that purpose to carry the ark before them. The work of ministers is to hold forth the word of life, and to take care of the administration of those ordinances which are the tokens of God's presence and the instruments of his power and grace; and herein they must go before the people of God in their way to heaven.

3. The people must follow the ark: *Remove from your place and go after it*, (1.) As those that are resolved never to forsake it. Wherever God's ordinances are, there we must be; if they flit, we must remove and go after them. (2.) As those that are entirely satisfied in its guidance, that it will lead in the best way to the best end; and therefore, *Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest*. This must be all their care, to attend the motions of the ark, and follow it with an implicit faith. Thus must we walk after the rule of the word and the direction of the Spirit in every thing, so shall *peace be upon us*, as it now was upon the Israel of God. They must follow the priests as far as they carried the ark, but no further; so we must follow our ministers only as they follow Christ.

4. In following the ark, they must *keep their distance*, v. 4. They must none of them come within a thousand yards of the ark. (1.) They must thus express their awful and reverent regard to that token of God's presence, lest its familiarity with them should breed contempt. This charge to them not to come near was agreeable to that dispensation of darkness, bondage, and terror: but we now through Christ have access with boldness. (2.) Thus it was made to appear that the ark was able to protect itself, and needed not to be guarded by the men of war, but was itself a guard to them. With what a noble defiance of the enemy did it leave all its friends half a mile behind except the unarmed priests that carried it as perfectly sufficient for its own safety and theirs that followed it! (3.) Thus it was the better seen by those that were to be led by it: *That you may know the way by which you must go*, seeing it, as it were, chalked out or tracked by the ark. Had they been allowed to come near it, they would have surrounded it, and none would have had the sight of it but those that were close to it; but, as it was put at such a distance before them, they would all have the satisfaction of seeing it, and would be animated by the sight. And it was with good reason that this provision was made for their encouragement: *For you have not passed this way heretofore*. This had been the character of all their way through the wilderness, it was an untrodden path, but this especially through Jordan. While we are here we must expect and prepare for unusual events, to pass ways that we have not passed before, and much more when we go hence; our way through the *valley of the shadow of death* is a way we have not gone before, which makes it the more formidable. But, if we have the assurance of God's presence, we need not fear; that will furnish us with such strength as we never had when we come to do a work we never did.

III. They were commanded to sanctify themselves, that they might be prepared to attend the ark; and with good reason: For *to-morrow the Lord will do wonders among you*, v. 5. See how magnificently he speaks of God's works: he *doeth wonders*, and is therefore to be adored, admired, and trusted in. See how intimately acquainted Joshua was with the divine counsels: he could tell before-hand what God would do, and when. See what preparation we must make to receive the discoveries of God's glory and the communications of his grace: we must sanctify ourselves. This we must do when we are to attend the ark, and God by it is about to do wonders among us; we must separate ourselves from all other cares, devote ourselves to God's honour, and *cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit*. The people of Israel were now entering into the holy land, and therefore must sanctify themselves. God was about to give them uncommon instances of his favour, which by meditation and prayer they must compose their minds to a very careful observation of, that they might give God the glory, and take to themselves the comfort, of these appearances.

IV. The priests were ordered to take up the ark and carry it *before the people*, v. 6. It was the Levites' work ordinarily to carry the ark, Num. 4:15. But on this great occasion the priests were ordered to do it. And they did as they were commanded, *took up the ark*, and did not think themselves disparaged, *went before the people*, and did not think themselves exposed; the ark they carried was both their honour and their defence. And now we may suppose that prayer of Moses used, when the ark set forward (Num. 10:35), *Rise up, Lord and let thy enemies be scattered*. Magistrates are here instructed to stir up ministers to their work, and to make use of their authority for the furtherance of religion. Ministers must likewise learn to go before in the way of God, and not to shrink nor draw back when dangers are before them. They must expect to be most struck at, but they *know whom they have trusted*.

Verses 7-13

We may observe here how God honours Joshua, and by this wondrous work he is about to do designs to make Israel know that he is their governor, and then how Joshua honours God and endeavours by it to make Israel know that he is their God. Thus those that honour God he will honour, and those whom he has advanced should do what they can in their places to exalt him.

I. God speaks to Joshua to put honour upon him, v. 7, 8. 1. It was a great honour God did him that he spoke to him as he had done to Moses from off the mercy-seat, before the priests removed it with the ark. This would make Joshua easy in himself and great among the people, that God was pleased to speak so familiarly to him. 2. that he designed to *magnify him in the sight of all Israel*. He had told him before that he would be with him (ch. 1:5), and that comforted him, but now all Israel shall see it, and this would magnify him. Those are truly great with whom God is and whom he employs and owns in his service. God magnified him because he would have the people magnify him. Pious magistrates are to be highly honoured and esteemed as public blessings, and the more we see of God with them the more we should honour them. by the dividing of the red Sea Israel was convinced that God was with Moses in bringing them out of Egypt; therefore they are said to be *baptized unto Moses in the sea*, 1 Co. 10:2. and upon that occasion they *believed him*, Ex. 14:31. And now, by the dividing of Jordan, they shall be convinced that God is in like manner with Joshua in bringing them into Canaan. God had magnified Joshua before on several occasions, but now he began to magnify him as the successor of Moses in the government. Some have observed that it was at

the banks of Jordan that God began to magnify Joshua, and at the same place he began to magnify our Lord Jesus as Mediator; for John was baptizing at Bethabara, *the house of passage*, and there it was that when our Saviour was baptized it was proclaimed concerning him, *This is my beloved Son*. 3. That by him he gave orders to the priests themselves, though they were his immediate attendants (v. 8): *Thou shalt command the priests*, that is, "Thou shalt make known to them the divine command in this matter, and take care that they observe it, to stand still at the brink of Jordan while the waters part, that it may appear to be *at the presence of the Lord*, of the mighty God of Jacob, that Jordan is *driven back*," Ps. 114:5, 7. God could have divided the river without the priests, but they could not without him. The priests must herein set a good example to the people, and teach them to do their utmost in the service of God, and trust him for help in time of need.

II. Joshua speaks to the people, and therein honours God.

1. He demands attention (v. 9): *"Come hither* to me, as many as can come within hearing, and, before you see the works, *hear the words of the Lord your God*, that you may compare them together and they may illustrate each other." He had commanded them to sanctify themselves, and therefore calls them to *hear the word of God*, for that is the ordinary means of sanctification, Jn. 17:17.

2. He now tells them, at length, by what way they should pass over Jordan, by the stopping of its streams (v. 13): *The waters of Jordan shall be cut off*. God could by a sudden and miraculous frost have congealed the surface, so that they might all have gone over upon the ice; but that being a thing sometimes done even in that country by the ordinary power of nature (Job 38:30), it would not have been such an honour to Israel's God, nor such a terror to Israel's enemies; it must therefore be done in such a way as had no precedent but the dividing of the Red Sea: and that miracle is here repeated, to show that God has the same power to finish the salvation of his people that he had to begin it, for he is the *Alpha* and the *Omega*; and that *the word of the Lord* (as the Chaldee reads it, v. 7), the essential, eternal Word, was as truly with Joshua as he was with Moses. And by the dividing of the waters from the waters, and the making of the dry land to appear which had been covered, God would remind them of that in which Moses by revelation had instructed them concerning the work of creation (Gen. 1:6, 9), that by what they now saw their belief of that which they there read might be assisted, and they might know that the God whom they worshipped was the same God that made the world and that it was the same power that was engaged and employed for them.

3. The people having been directed before to follow the ark are here told that it should *pass before them into Jordan*, v. 11. Observe, (1.) The ark of the covenant must be their guide. during the reign of Moses, the cloud was their guide, but now, in Joshua's reign, the ark; both were visible signs of God's presence and presidency, but divine grace under the Mosaic dispensation was wrapt up as in a cloud and covered with a veil, while by Christ, our Joshua, it is revealed in the ark of the covenant unveiled. (2.) It is called *the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth*. "He that is your God (v. 9), in covenant with you, is the *Lord of all the earth*, has both right and power to command, control, use, and dispose of all nations and of all creatures. He is the *Lord of all the earth*, therefore he needs not you, nor can he be benefited by you; therefore it is your honour and happiness to have him in covenant with you: if he be yours, all the creatures are at your service, and when he pleases shall be employed for you." When we are praising and worshipping God as Israel's God, and ours through Christ, we must

remember that he is the *Lord of the whole earth*, and reverence him and trust in him accordingly. Some observe an accent in the original, which they think directs us to translate it somewhat more emphatically, *Behold the ark of the covenant, even the ark of the Lord, or even of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth.* (3.) They are told that the ark should *pass before them into Jordan*. God would not appoint them to go any where but where he himself would go before them and go with them; and they might safely venture, even into Jordan itself, if the ark of the covenant led them. While we make God's precepts our rule, his promises our stay, and his providence our guide, we need not dread the greatest difficulties we may meet with in the way of duty. That promise is sure to all the seed (Isa. 43:2), *When thou passes through the waters I will be with thee, and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee.*

4. From what God was now about to do for them he infers an assurance of what he would yet further do. This he mentions first, so much was his heart upon it, and so great a satisfaction did it give him (v. 10): *"Hereby you shall know that the living God (the true God, and God of power, not one of the dead gods of the heathen) is among you, though you see him not, nor are to have any image of him, is among you to give you law, secure your welfare, and receive your homage,—is among you in this great undertaking now before you; and therefore you shall, nay, he himself will, without fail, drive out from before you the Canaanites."* So that the dividing of Jordan was intended to be to them, (1.) A sure token of God's presence with them. By this they could not but *know that God was among them*, unless their unbelief was as obstinate against the most convincing evidence as that of their fathers was, who presently after God had divided the Red Sea before them, impudently asked, *Is the Lord among us, or is he not?* Ex. 17:7. (2.) A sure pledge of the conquest of Canaan. "If the living God is among you, *expelling he will expel* (so the Hebrew phrase is) *from before you the Canaanites.*" He will do it certainly, and do it effectually. What should hinder him? What can stand in his way before whom rivers are divided and dried up? The forcing of the lines was certain presage of the ruin of all their hosts: how could they stand their ground when Jordan itself was driven back? When they had not courage to dispute this pass, but trembled at the approach of the *mighty God of Jacob* (Ps. 114:7), what opposition could they ever make after this? This assurance which Joshua here gives them was so well grounded that it would enable one Israelite to chase a thousand Canaanites, and two to put then thousand to flight; and it would be abundantly strengthened by remembering the song of Moses, dictated forty years before, which plainly foretold the dividing of Jordan and the influence it would have upon the driving out of the Canaanites. Ex. 15:15–17, *"The inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away, and so be effectually driven out; they shall be as still as a stone till thy people pass over, and then thou shalt bring them in and plant them."* Note, God's glorious appearances for his church and people ought to be improved by us for the encouragement of our faith and hope for the future. *As for God, his work is perfect.* If Jordan's flood cannot keep them out, Canaan's force cannot turn them out again.

5. He directs them to get twelve men ready, one of each tribe, who must be within call to receive such orders as Joshua should afterwards give them, v. 12. It does not appear that they were to attend the priests, and walk with them when they carried the ark, that they might more immediately be witnesses of the wonders done by it, as some think; but they were to be at hand for the service they were called to, ch. 4:4, etc.

Verses 14-17

Here we have a short and plain account of the dividing of the river Jordan, and the passage of the children of Israel through it. The story is not garnished with the flowers of rhetoric (gold needs not to be painted), but it tells us, in short, matter of fact.

I. That this river was now broader and deeper than usually it was at other times of the year, v. 15. The melting of the snow on the mountains of Lebanon, near which this river had its rise, was the occasion that at the time of harvest, barley-harvest, which was the spring of the year, Jordan overflowed all his banks. This great flood, just at that time (which Providence might have restrained for once, of which he might have ordered them to cross at another time of the year) very much magnified the power of God and his kindness to Israel. Note, Though the opposition given to the salvation of God's people have all imaginable advantages, yet God can and will conquer it. Let the banks of Jordan be filled to the brink, filled till they run over, it is as easy to Omnipotence to divide them, and dry them up, as if they were ever so narrow, ever so shallow; it is all one with the Lord.

II. That as soon as ever the feet of the priests dipped in the brim of the water the stream stopped immediately, as if a sluice had been led down to dam it up, v. 15, 16. So that the waters above swelled, stood on a heap, and ran back, and yet, as it should seem did not spread, but congealed, which unaccountable rising of the river was observed with amazement by those that live upward upon it many miles off, and the remembrance of it remained among them long after: the waters on the other side this invisible dam ran down of course, and left the bottom of the river dry as far downward, it is likely, as they swelled upward.

When they passed through the red Sea, the waters were a wall on either hand, here only on the right-hand. Note, The God of nature can, when he pleases, change the course of nature, and alter its properties, can turn fluids into solids, *waters into standing rocks*, as, on the contrary, *rocks into standing waters*, to serve his own purposes. See Ps. 114:5, 8. What cannot God do? What will he not do for the perfecting of his peoples, salvation? Sometimes he *cleaves the earth with rivers* (Hab. 3:9), and sometimes, as here, cleaves the rivers without earth. It is easy to imagine how, when the course of this strong rapid stream was arrested on a sudden, *the waters roared and were troubled*, so that the mountains seemed to *shake with the swelling thereof* (Ps. 46:3), how *the floods lifted up their voice, the floods lifted up their waves*, while the Lord on high showed himself *mightier than the noise of these many waters*, Ps. 93:3, 4. With reference to this the prophet asks, *Was the Lord displeased against the rivers? was thine anger against the rivers?* Hab. 3:8. No, *Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people*, v. 13. In allusion to this, it is foretold, among the great things God will do for the gospel church in the latter days, that the great river Euphrates shall be dried up, that *the way of the kings of the east may be prepared*, Rev. 16:12. When the time has come for Israel's entrance into the land of promise all difficulties shall be conquered, *mountains shall become plains* (Zec. 4:7) and rivers become dry, for the *ransomed of the Lord to pass over*. When we have finished our pilgrimage through this wilderness, death will be like this Jordan between us and the heavenly Canaan, but the ark of the covenant has prepared us a way through it; it is the last enemy that shall be destroyed.

III. That *the people passed over right against Jericho*, which was, 1. An instance of their boldness, and a noble defiance of their enemies. Jericho was one of the strongest cities, and yet they dared to face it at their first entrance. 2. It was an encouragement to them to venture through Jordan, for Jericho was a goodly city and the country about it extremely pleasant;

and, having that in view as their own, what difficulties could discourage them from taking possession? 3. It would increase the confusion and terror of their enemies, who no doubt strictly observed their motions, and were the amazed spectators of this work of wonders.

IV. That the priests *stood still in the midst of Jordan while all the people passed over*, v. 17. There the ark was appointed to be, to show that the same power that parted the waters kept them parted as long as there was occasion; and had not the divine presence, of which the ark was a token, been their security, the waters would have returned upon them and buried them. there the priests were appointed to stand still, 1. To try their faith, whether they could venture to take their post, when god assigned it to them, with mountains of water over their heads. As they made a bold step when they set the first foot into Jordan, so now they made a bold stand when they tarried longest in Jordan; but they knew they carried their own protection with them. Note, Ministers in times of peril should be examples of courage and confidence in the divine goodness. 2. It was to encourage the faith of the people, that they might go triumphantly into Canaan, and *fear no evil*, no, not in this *valley of the shadow of death* (for so the divided river was), being assured of God's presence, which interposed between them and the greatest danger, between them and the proud waters, which otherwise had gone over their souls. Thus in the greatest dangers the saints are *comforted with his rod and his staff*, Ps. 23:4.

Chapter 4

This chapter gives a further account of the miraculous passage of Israel through Jordan. I. The provision that was made at that time to preserve the memorial of it, by twelve stones set up in Jordan (v. 9) and other twelve stones taken up out of Jordan (v. 1-8). II. The march of the people through Jordan's channel, the two tribes first, then all the people, and the priests that bore the ark last (v. 10-14). III. The closing of the waters again upon their coming up with the ark (v. 15-19). IV. The erecting of the monument in Gilgal, to preserve the remembrance of this work of wonder to posterity (v. 20-24).

Verses 1-9

We may well imagine how busy Joshua and all the men of war were while they were passing over Jordan, when besides their own marching into an enemy's country, and in the face of the enemy, which could not but occasion them many thoughts of fear, they had their wives, and children, and families, their cattle, and tents, and all their effects, bag and baggage, to convey by this strange and untrodden path, which we must suppose either very muddy or very stony, troublesome to the weak and frightful to the timorous, the descent to the bottom of the river and the ascent out of it steep, so that every man must needs have his head full of care and his hands full of business, and Joshua more than any of them. And yet, in the midst of all his hurry, care must be taken to perpetuate the memorial of this wonderful work of God, and this care might not be adjourned to a time of greater leisure. Note, How much soever we have to do of business for ourselves and our families, we must not neglect nor omit what we have to do for the glory of God and the serving of his honour, for that is our best business. Now, I. God gave orders for the preparing of this memorial. Had Joshua done it without divine direction, it might have looked like a design to perpetuate his own name and honour, nor would it have commanded so sacred and venerable a regard from posterity as now, when God himself appointed it. Note, God's works of wonder ought to be kept in everlasting remembrance, and means devised for the preserving of the memorial of them. Some of the Israelites that passed over Jordan perhaps were so stupid, and so little affected with this great favour of God to them, that they felt no concern to have it remembered; while others, it may be, were so much affected with it, and had such deep impressions made upon them by it, that they thought there needed no memorial of it to be erected, the heart and tongue of every Israelite in every age would be a living lasting monument of it. But God, knowing their frame, and how apt they had been soon to forget his works, ordered an expedient for the keeping of this in remembrance to all generations, that those who could not, or would not, read the record of it in the sacred history, might come to the knowledge of it by the monument set up in remembrance of it, of which the common tradition of the country would be an explication; it would likewise serve to corroborate the proof of the matter of fact, and would remain a standing evidence of it to those who in after-ages might question the truth of it. A monument is to be erected, and, 1. Joshua, as chief captain, must give direction about it (v. 1): *When all the people had clean passed over Jordan*, not even the feeble, that were the hindmost of them, left behind, so that God had done his work completely, and every Israelite got safe into Canaan, then God spoke unto Joshua to provide materials for this monument. It is the pious conjecture of the learned bishop Patrick that Joshua had gone into some place of retirement to return thanks immediately for this wonderful mercy, and then God met him, and spoke thus to

him. Or, perhaps, it was by Eleazar the priest that God gave these and other instructions to Joshua; for, though he is not mentioned here, yet, when Joshua was ordained by the imposition of hands to this great trust, God appointed that Eleazar should *ask counsel for him after the judgment of Urim, and at his word Joshua and all the children of Israel must go out and come in*, Num. 27:21. 2. One man out of each tribe, and he a chosen man, must be employed to prepare materials for this monument, that each tribe might have the story told them by one of themselves, and each tribe might contribute something to the glory of God thereby (v. 2, 4): *Out of every tribe a man*. Not the Levites only, but every Israelite must, in his place, help to *make known to the sons of men God's mighty acts*, Ps. 145:12. The two tribes, though seated already in their possession, yet, sharing in the mercy, must lend a hand to the memorial of it. 3. The stones that must be set up for this memorial are ordered to be taken out of the midst of the channel (where, probably, there lay abundance of great stones), and as near as might be from the very place where the priests stood *with the ark*, v. 3, 5. This intended monument deserved to be made of stones curiously cut with the finest and most exquisite art, but these stones out of the bottom of the river were more natural and more apt indications of the miracle. Let posterity know by this that Jordan was driven back, for these very stones were then fetched out of it. In the institution of signs, God always chose that which was most proper and significant, rather than that which is pompous or curious; for *God hath chosen the foolish things of the world*. These twelve men, after they got over Jordan, must be sent back to the place where the ark stood, being permitted to come near it (which others might not) for this service: *"Pass over before the ark* (v. 5), that is, into the presence of the ark, which now stands in the midst of Jordan, and thence fetch these stones." 4. The use of these stones is here appointed for a sign (v. 6), a memorial, v. 7. They would give occasion to the children to ask their parents in time to come, *How came these stones hither?* (probably the land about not being stony), and then the parents would inform them, as they themselves had been informed, that in this place Jordan was divided by the almighty power of God, to give Israel passage into Canaan, as Joshua enlarges on this head, v. 22, etc.

II. According to these orders the thing was done. 1. Twelve stones were taken up out of the midst of Jordan, and carried in the sight of the people to the place where they had their head-quarters that night, v. 8. It is probable that the stones they took were as big as they could well carry, and as near as might be of a size and shape. But whether they went away with them immediately to the place, or whether they staid to attend the ark, and kept pace with the solemn procession of that, to grace its triumphant entry in to Canaan, is not certain. By these stones which they were ordered to take up God did, as it were, give them livery and seisin of this good land; it is all their own, let them enter and take possession; therefore what these twelve did the children of Israel are said to do (v. 8), because they were the representatives of their respective tribes. In allusion to this, we may observe that when the Lord Jesus, our Joshua, having overcome the sharpness of death and dried up that Jordan, had opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers, he appointed his twelve apostles according to the number of the tribes of Israel, by the memorial of the gospel to transmit the knowledge of this to remote places and future ages. 2. Other twelve stones (probably much larger than the other, for we read not that they were each of them one man's load) were set up *in the midst of Jordan* (v. 9), piled up so high in a heap or pillar as that the top of it might be seen above the water when the river was low, or seen in the water when it was clear, or at least the noise of commotion of the water passing over it would be observable, and

the bargemen would avoid it, as they do a rock. Some way or other, it is likely, it was discernible, so as to notify the very place where the ark stood, and to serve for a duplicate to the other monument, which was to set up on dry land in Gilgal, for the confirming of its testimony and the preserving of its tradition. The sign being doubled, no doubt the thing was certain.

Verses 10-19

The inspired historian seems to be so well pleased with his subject here that he is loth to quit it, and is therefore very particular in his narrative, especially in observing how closely Joshua pursued the orders God gave him, and that he did nothing without divine direction, finishing all that *the Lord had commanded* him (v. 10), which is also said to be what *Moses commanded*. We read not of any particular commands that Moses gave to Joshua about this matter: the thing was altogether new to him. It must therefore be understood of the general instructions Moses had given him to follow the divine direction, to deliver that to the people which he *received of the Lord*, and to take all occasions to remind them of their duty to God, as the best return for his favours to them. This which Moses, who was now dead and gone, had said to him, he had in mind at this time, and *did accordingly*. It is well for us to have the good instructions that have been given us ready to us when we have occasion for them.

I. *The people hastened and passed over*, v. 10. Some understand this of the twelve men that carried the stones, but it seems rather to be meant of the body of the people; for, though an account was given of their passing over (v. 1), yet here it is repeated for the sake of this circumstance, which was to be added, that they passed over *in haste*, either because Joshua by their officers ordered them to make haste, for it was to be but one day's work and they must not *leave a hoof behind*, or perhaps it was their own inclination that hastened them. 1. Some hastened because they were not able to trust God. They were afraid the waters should return upon them, being conscious of guilt, and diffident of the divine power and goodness. 2. Others because they were not willing to tempt God to continue the miracle longer than needs must, nor would they put the patience of the priests that bore the ark too much to the stretch by unnecessary delay. 3. Others because they were eager to be in Canaan, and would thus show how much they longed after that pleasant land. 4. Those that considered least, yet hastened because others did. He that believeth doth not make haste to *anticipate* God's counsels, but he makes haste to *attend* them, Isa. 28:16.

II. The two tribes and a half led the van, v. 12, 13. So they had promised when they had their lot given them on that side Jordan, Num. 32:27. And Joshua had lately reminded them of their promise, ch. 1:12–15. It was fit that those who had the first settlement should be the first in the encounter of difficulties, the rather because they had not the incumbrance of families with them as the other tribes had, and they were all chosen men, and fit for service, ready armed. It was a good providence that they had so strong a body to lead them on, and would be an encouragement to the rest. And the two tribes had no reason to complain: the post of danger is the post of honour.

III. When all the people had got clear to the other side, the priests with the ark came up out of Jordan. This, one would think, should have been done of course; their own reason would tell them that now there was no more occasion for them, and yet they did not stir a step till Joshua ordered them to move, and Joshua did not order them out of Jordan till God directed him to do so, v. 15–17. so observant were they of Joshua, and he of God, which was their praise, as it was their happiness to be under such

good direction. How low a condition soever God may at any time bring his priests or people to, let them patiently wait, till by his providence he shall call them up out of it, as the priests here were called to come up out of Jordan, and let them not be weary of waiting, while they have the tokens of God's presence with them, even the ark of the covenant, in the depth of their adversity.

IV. As soon as ever the priests and the ark had come up out of Jordan, the waters of the river, which had stood on a heap, gradually flowed down according to their nature and usual course, and soon filled the channel again, v. 18. This makes it yet more evident that the stop which had now been given to the river was not from any secret natural cause, but purely from the power of God's presence, and for the sake of his Israel; for when Israel's turn was served, and the token of God's presence was removed, immediately the water went forward again; so that if it be asked, *What ailed thee, O Jordan! that thou wast driven back?* It must be answered, It was purely in obedience to the God of Israel, and in kindness to the Israel of God. There is therefore none *like unto the God of Jeshurun; happy also art thou, O Israel! who is like unto thee, O people?* Some observe here, by way of allusion, that when the ark, and the priests that bore it, are removed from any place, the flood-gates are drawn up, the defence has departed, and an inundation of judgments is to be expected shortly. Those that are unchurched will soon be undone. The glory has departed if the ark is taken.

V. Notice is taken of the honour put upon Joshua by all this (v. 14): *On that day the Lord magnified Joshua*, both by the fellowship he admitted him to with himself, speaking to him upon all occasions and being ready to be consulted by him, and by the authority he confirmed him in over both priests and people. Those that honour God he will honour, and when he will magnify a man, as he had said he would magnify Joshua (ch. 3:7), he will do it effectually. Yet it was not for Joshua's sake only that he was thus magnified, but to put him in a capacity of doing so much the more service to Israel, for hereupon they feared him as they feared Moses. See here what is the best and surest way to command the respect of inferiors, and to gain their reverence and observance, not by blustering and threatening, and carrying it with a high hand, but by holiness and love, and all possible indications of a constant regard to their welfare, and to God's will and honour. Those are feared in the best manner, and to the best purpose, who make it to appear that God is with them, and that they set him before them. Those that are sanctified are truly magnified, and are worthy of double honour. Favourites of heaven should be looked on with awe.

VI. An account is kept of the time of this great event (v. 19): it was *on the tenth day of the first month*, just forty years since they came out of Egypt, wanting five days. God had said in his wrath that they should wander forty years in the wilderness, but, to make up that forty, we must take in the first year, which was then past, and had been a year of triumph in their deliverance out of Egypt, and this last, which had been a year of triumph likewise on the other side Jordan, so that all the forty were not years of sorrow; and at last he brought them into Canaan five days before the forty years were ended, to show how little pleasure God takes in punishing, how swift he is to show mercy, and that *for the elects' sake the days of trouble are shortened*, Mt. 24:22. God ordered it so that they should enter Canaan four days before the annual solemnity of the passover, and on the very day when the preparation for it was to begin (Ex. 12:3), because he would have their entrance into Canaan Graced and sanctified with that religious feast, and would have them then to be reminded of their deliverance out of Egypt,

that, comparing them together, God might be glorified as the *Alpha* and *Omega* of their bliss.

Verses 20-24

The twelve stones which were *laid down in Gilgal* (v. 8) are here set up either one upon another, yet so as that they might be distinctly counted, or one by another in rows; for after they were fixed they are not called *a heap of stones*, but *these stones*.

I. It is here taken for granted that posterity would enquire into the meaning of them, supposing them intended for a memorial: *Your children shall ask their fathers* (for who else should they ask?) *What mean these stones?* Notes, Those that will be wise when they are old must be inquisitive when they are young. Our Lord Jesus, though he had in himself the fulness of knowledge, has by his example taught children and young people to hear and ask questions, Lu. 2:46. Perhaps when John was baptizing in Jordan at Bethabara (the house of passage, where the people passed over) he pointed at these very stones, while saying (Mt. 3:9) *God is able of these stones* (which were at first set up by the twelve tribes) *to raise up children unto Abraham*. The stones being the memorial of the miracle, the children's question gave occasion for the improvement of it; but our Saviour says (Lu. 10:40), *If the children should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out*; for one way or other the Lord will be glorified in his works of wonder.

II. The parents are here directed what answer to give to this enquiry (v. 22): *"You shall let your children know that which you have yourselves learned from the written word and from your fathers."* Note, It is the duty of parents to acquaint their children betimes with the word and works of God, that they may be trained up in the way they should go.

1. They must let their children know that Jordan was driven back before Israel, who *went through it upon dry land*, and that this was the very place where they passed over. They saw how deep and strong a stream Jordan now was, but the divine power put a stop to it, even when it overflowed all its banks—"and this for you, that live so long after." Note, God's mercies to our ancestors were mercies to us; and we should take all occasions to revive the remembrance of the great things God did for our fathers *in the days of old*. The place thus marked would be a memorandum to them: Israel came over this Jordan. A local memory would be of use to them, and the sight of the place remind them of that which was done there; and not only the inhabitants of that country, but strangers and travellers, would look upon these stones and receive instruction. Many, upon the sight of the stones, would go to their Bibles, and there read the history of this wondrous work; and some perhaps, upon reading the history, though living at a distance, would have the curiosity to go and see the stones.

2. They must take that occasion to tell their children of the drying up of the Red Sea forty years before: *As the Lord your God did to the Red Sea*. Note. (1.) It greatly magnifies later mercies to compare them with former mercies, for, by making the comparison, it appears that God is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. (2.) Later mercies should bring to remembrance former mercies, and revive our thankfulness for them.

3. They must put them in the way of making a good use of these works of wonder, the knowledge whereof was thus carefully transmitted to them, v. 24. (1.) The power of God was hereby magnified. All the world was or might be convinced that *the hand of the Lord is mighty*, that nothing is too hard for God to do; nor can any power, no, not that of nature itself, obstruct what God will effect. The deliverances of God's people are instructions to all people, and fair warnings not to contend with

Omnipotence. (2.) The people of God were engaged and encouraged to persevere in his service *"That you might fear the Lord your God, and consequently do your duty to him, and this for ever,"* or *all days (margin)*, "every day, all the days of your lives, and your seed throughout your generations." The remembrance of this wonderful work should effectually restrain them from the worship of other gods, and constrain them to abide and abound in the service of their own God. Note, In all the instructions and informations parents give their children, they should have this chiefly in their eye, to teach and engage them to *fear God for ever*. Serious godliness is the best learning.

Chapter 5

Israel have now got over Jordan, and the waters which had opened before them, to favour their march forward, are closed again behind them, to forbid their retreat backward. They have now got footing in Canaan, and must apply themselves to the conquest of it, in order to which this chapter tells us, I. How their enemies were dispirited (v. 1). II. What was done at their first landing to assist and encourage them. 1. The covenant of circumcision was renewed (v. 2-9). 2. The feast of the passover was celebrated (v. 10). 3. Their camp was victualled with the corn of the land, whereupon the manna ceased (v. 11, 12). 4. The captain of the Lord's host himself appeared to Joshua to animate and direct him (v. 13-15).

Verses 1-9

A vast show, no doubt, the numerous camp of Israel made in the plains of Jericho, where now they had pitched their tents. *Who can count the dust of Jacob?* That which had long been the *church in the wilderness has now come up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved, and looks forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners.* How terrible she was in the eyes of her enemies we are here told, v. 1. How fair and clear she was made in the eyes of her friends, by the rolling away of the reproach of Egypt, we are told in the following verses.

I. Here is the fright which the Canaanites were put into by their miraculously passing over Jordan, v. 1. The news of it was soon dispersed all the country over, not only as a prodigy in itself, but as an alarm to all the kings and kingdoms of Canaan. Now, as when Babylon was taken, *One post runs to meet another, and one messenger to meet another,* to carry the amazing tidings to every corner of their land, Jer. 51:31. And here we are told what impressions the tidings made upon the kings of this land: *Their heart melted like wax before the fire, neither was there spirit in them any more.* This intimates that, though the heart of the people generally had fainted before (as Rahab owned, ch. 2:9), yet the kings had till now kept up their spirits pretty well, had promised themselves that, being in possession, their country populous, and their cities fortified, they should be able to make their part good against the invaders; but when they heard not only that they had come over Jordan, and that this defence of their country was broken through, but that they had come over by a miracle, the God of nature manifestly fighting for them, *their hearts failed them* too, they gave up the cause for gone, and were now at their wits' end. And, 1. they had reason enough to be afraid; Israel itself was a formidable body, and much more so when God was its head, a God of almighty power. What can make head against them if Jordan be driven back before them? 2. God impressed these fears upon them, and dispirited them, as he had promised (Ex. 23:27), *I will send my fear before thee.* God can make the wicked to fear *where no fear is* (Ps. 53:5.), much more where there is such cause for fear as was here. He that made the soul can, when he pleases, make his sword thus to approach to it and kill it with his terrors.

II. The opportunity which this gave to the Israelites to circumcise those among them that were uncircumcised: *At that time* (v. 2), when the country about them was in that great consternation, God ordered Joshua to circumcise the children of Israel, for at that time it might be done with safety even in an enemy's country; their hearts being melted, their hands were tied, that they could not take this advantage against them as Simeon and Levi did against the Shechemites, to come upon them *when they*

were sore. Joshua could not be sure of this, and therefore, if he had ordered this general circumcision just at this time of his own head, he might justly have been censured as imprudent; for, how good soever the thing was in itself, in the eye of reason it was not seasonable at this time, and might have been of dangerous consequence; but, when God commanded him to do it, he must not *consult with flesh and blood*; he that bade them to do it would, no doubt, protect them and bear them out in it. Now observe,

1. The occasion there was for this general circumcision. (1.) All that came out of Egypt were circumcised, v. 5. while they had peace in Egypt doubtless they circumcised their children the eighth day according to the law. But after they began to be oppressed, especially when the edict was made for the destruction of their male infants, the administration of this ordinance was interrupted; many of them were uncircumcised, of whom there was a general circumcision, either during the time of the three days' darkness, as Dr. Lightfoot conjectures, or a year after, just before their eating the second passover at Mount Sinai, and in order to that solemnity (Num. 9:2) as many think. And it is with reference to that general circumcision that this is called a *second*, v. 2. But the learned Masius thinks it refers to the general circumcision of Abraham's family when that ordinance was first instituted, Gen. 17:23. That first confirmed the promise of the land of Canaan, this second was a thankful celebration of the performance of that promise. But, (2.) All that were *born in the wilderness*, namely, after their walking in the wilderness, became by the divine sentence a judgment upon them for their disobedience, as is intimated by that repetition of the sentence, v. 6. All that were born since that fatal day on which God swore in his wrath that none of that generation should *enter into his rest* were uncircumcised. But what shall we say to this? Had not God enjoined it to Abraham, under a very severe penalty, that every man-child of his seed should be circumcised on the eighth day? Gen. 17:9–14. Was it not the seal of the everlasting covenant? Was not so great a stress laid upon it when they were coming out of Egypt that when, immediately after the first passover, the law concerning that feast was made perpetual, this was one clause of it, that no uncircumcised person should eat of it, but should be deemed as a stranger? and yet, under the government of Moses himself, to have all their children that were born for thirty-eight years together left uncircumcised is unaccountable. So great an omission could not be general but by divine direction. Now, [1.] Some think circumcision was omitted because it was needless: it was appointed to be a mark of distinction between the Israelites and other nations, and therefore in the wilderness, where they were so perfectly separated from all and mingled with none, there was no occasion for it. [2.] Others think that they did not look upon the precept of circumcision as obligatory till they came to settle in Canaan; for in the covenant made with them at Mount Sinai nothing was said about circumcision, neither was it of Moses but *of the fathers* (Jn. 7:22), and with particular reference to the grant of the land of Canaan, Gen. 17:8. [3.] Others think that God favourably dispensed with the observance of this ordinance in consideration of the unsettledness of their state, and their frequent removals while they were in the wilderness. It was requisite that children after they were circumcised should rest for some time while they were sore, and stirring them might be dangerous to them; God therefore would have mercy and not sacrifice. This reason is generally acquiesced in, but to me it is not satisfactory, for sometimes they staid a year in a place (Num. 9:22), if not much longer, and in their removals the little children, though sore, might be wrapped so warm, and carried so easy, as to receive no damage, and might certainly be much

better accommodated than the mothers in travail or while lying in. Therefore, [4.] To me it seems to have been a continued token of God's displeasure against them for their unbelief and murmuring. Circumcision was originally a seal of the promise of the land of Canaan, as we observed before. It was in the believing hope of that good land that the patriarchs circumcised their children; but when God had *sworn in his wrath* concerning the men of whom he said that they should be consumed in the wilderness, and never enter Canaan, nor come within sight of it (as that sentence is here repeated, v. 6, reference being made to it), as a further ratification of that sentence, and to be a constant memorandum of it to them, all that fell under that sentence, and were to fall by it, were forbidden to circumcise their children, by which they were plainly told that, whatever others might, they should never have the benefit of that promise of which circumcision was the seal. And this was such a significant indication of God's wrath as the breaking of the tables of the covenant was when Israel had broken the covenant by making the golden calf. It is true that there is no express mention of this judicial prohibition in the account of that sentence; but an intimation of it in Num. 14:33, *Your children shall bear your whoredoms*. It is probable the children of Caleb and Joshua were circumcised, for they were excepted out of that sentence, and of Caleb it is particularly said, *To him will I give the land, and to his children* (Deu. 1:36), which was the very promise that circumcision was the seal of: and Joshua is here told to circumcise the people, not his own family. Whatever the reason was, it seems that this great ordinance was omitted in Israel for almost forty years together, which is a plain indication that it was not of absolute necessity, nor was to be of perpetual obligation, but should in the fulness of time be abolished, as now it was for so long a time suspended.

2. The orders given to Joshua for this general circumcision (v. 2): *Circumcise again the children of Israel*, not the same person, but the body of the people. Why was this ordered to be done now? Answ. (2.) Because now the promise of which circumcision was instituted to be the seal was performed. The seed of Israel was brought safely into the land of Canaan. "Let them therefore hereby own the truth of that promise which their fathers had disbelieved, and could not find in their hearts to trust to." (2.) Because now the threatening of which the suspending of circumcision for thirty-eight years was the ratification was fully executed by the expiring of the forty years. That *warfare is accomplished, that iniquity is pardoned* (Isa. 40:2), and therefore now the seal of the covenant is revived again. But why was it not done sooner? why not while they were resting some months in the plains of Moab? why not during the thirty days of their mourning for Moses? Why was it not deferred longer, till they had made some progress in the conquest of Canaan, and had gained a settlement there, at least till they had entrenched themselves, and fortified their camp? why must it be done the very next day after they had come over Jordan? Answ. Because divine Wisdom saw that to be the fittest time, just when the forty years were ended, and they had entered Canaan; and the reasons which human wisdom would have offered against it were easily overruled. [1.] God would hereby show that the camp of Israel was not governed by the ordinary rules and measures of war, but by immediate direction from God, who by thus exposing them, in the most dangerous moments, magnified his own power in protecting them even then. And this great instance of security, in disabling themselves for action just when they were entering upon action, proclaimed such confidence in the divine care for their safety as would increase their enemies' fears, much more when their scouts informed them not only of the thing itself that was done, but of the meaning of it, that it was a seal of the grant of this land to Israel. [2.] God would

hereby animate his people Israel against the difficulties they were now to encounter, by confirming his covenant with them, which gave them unquestionable assurance of victory and success, and the full possession of the land of promise. [3.] God would hereby teach them, and us with them, in all great undertakings to *begin with God*, to make sure of his favour, by offering ourselves to him *a living sacrifice* (for that was signified by the blood of circumcision), and then we may expect to prosper in all we do. [4.] The reviving of circumcision, after it had been so long disused, was designed to revive the observance of other institutions, the omission of which had been connived at in the wilderness. This command to circumcise them was to remind them of that which Moses had told them (Deu. 21:8), that when they should have come *over Jordan* they must not do as they had done *in the wilderness*, but must come under a stricter discipline. It was said concerning many of the laws God had given them that they must observe them *in the land* to which they were going, Deu. 6:1; 12:1. [5.] This *second* circumcision, as it is here called, was typical of the spiritual circumcision with which the Israel of God, when they enter into the gospel rest, are circumcised; it is the learned bishop Pierson's observation that this circumcision being performed under the direction of Joshua, Moses' successor, it points to *Jesus as the true circumciser*, the author of *another circumcision* than that *of the flesh*, commanded by the law, even the *circumcision of the heart* (Rom. 2:29), called the *circumcision of Christ*, Col, 2:11.

3. The people's obedience to these orders. Joshua *circumcised the children of Israel* (v. 3), not himself with his own hands, but he commanded that it should be done, and took care that it was done: it might soon be despatched, for it was not necessary that it should be done by a priest or Levite, but any one might be employed to do it. All those that were under twenty years old when the people were numbered at Mount Sinai, and not being numbered with them fell not by the fatal sentence, were circumcised, and by them all the rest might be circumcised in a little time. The people had promised to hearken to Joshua as they had hearkened to Moses (ch. 1:17), and here they gave an instance of their dutifulness by submitting to this painful institution, and not calling him for the sake of it a bloody governor, as Zipporah because of the circumcision called Moses a bloody husband.

4. The names given to the place where this was done, to perpetuate the memory of it. (1.) It was called *the hill of the foreskins*, v. 3. Probably the foreskins that were cut off were laid on a heap, and covered with earth, so that they made a little hillock. (2.) It was called *Gilgal*, from a word which signifies to take away, from that which God said to Joshua (v. 9), *This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt*. God is jealous for the honour of his people, his own honour being so much interested in it; and, whatever reproach they may lie under for a time, first or last it will certainly be rolled away, and every tongue that riseth up against them he will condemn. [1.] Their circumcision rolled away the reproach of Egypt. they were hereby owned to be the free-born children of God, having the seal of the covenant in their flesh, and so the reproach of their bondage in Egypt was removed. They were tainted with the idolatry of Egypt, and that was their reproach; but now that they were circumcised it was to be hoped they would be so entirely devoted to God that the reproach of their affection to Egypt would be rolled away. [2.] Their coming safely to Canaan rolled away the reproach of Egypt, for it silenced that spiteful suggestion of the Egyptians, that *for mischief they were brought out, the wilderness had shut them in*, Ex. 14:3. Their wandering so long in the wilderness confirmed the reproach, but now that they had entered Canaan in triumph that reproach was done away. When God glorifies

himself in perfecting the salvation of his people he not only silences the reproach of their enemies, but rolls it upon themselves.

Verses 10-12

We may well imagine that the people of Canaan were astonished, and that when they observed the motions of the enemy they could not but think them very strange. When soldiers take the field they are apt to think themselves excused from religious exercises (they have not time nor thought to attend to them), yet Joshua opens the campaign with one act of devotion after another. What was afterwards said to another Joshua might truly be said to this, *Hear now, O Joshua! thou and thy fellows that sit before thee are men wondered at* (Zec. 3:8), and yet indeed he took the right method. that is likely to end well which begins with God. Here is,

I. A solemn passover kept, at the time appointed by the law, *the fourteenth day of the first month*, and in the same place where they were circumcised, v. 10. While they were wandering in the wilderness they were denied the benefit and comfort of this ordinance, as a further token of God's displeasure; but now, in answer to the prayer of Moses upon the passing of that sentence Ps. 90:15, God comforted them again, after the time that he had afflicted them, and therefore now that joyful ordinance is revived again. Now that they had entered into Canaan it was very seasonable to remember those wondrous works of divine power and goodness by which they were brought out of Egypt. The finishing of mercies should bring to mind the beginning of them; and when it is perfect day we must not forget how welcome the morning-light was when we had long waited for it. The solemn passover followed immediately after the solemn circumcision; thus, when those that received the word were baptized, immediately we find them *breaking bread*, Acts 2:41, 42. They kept this passover in the plains of Jericho, as it were in defiance of the Canaanites that were round about them and enraged against them, and yet could not give them any disturbance. Thus God gave them an early instance of the performance of that promise that when they went up to keep the feasts their land should be taken under the special protection of the divine Providence. Ex. 34:24, *Neither shall any man desire thy land*. He now *prepared a table before them in the presence of their enemies*, Ps. 23:5.

II. Provision made for their camp of the *corn of the land*, and the *ceasing of the manna* thereupon, v. 11, 12. Manna was a wonderful mercy to them when they needed it. But it was the mark of a wilderness state; it was the food of children; and therefore, though it was angel's food, and not to be complained of a light bread, yet it would be more acceptable to them to eat of the *corn of the land*, and this they are now furnished with.

1. The country people, having retired for safety into Jericho, had left their barns and fields, and all that was in them, which served for the subsistence of this great army. And the supply came very seasonably, for, (1.) After the passover they were to keep *the feast of unleavened bread*, which they could not do according to the appointment when they had nothing but manna to live upon; and perhaps this was one reason why it was intermitted in the wilderness. But now they found old corn enough in the barns of the Canaanites to supply them plentifully for that occasion; thus *the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just*, and little did those who laid it up think *whose all these things should be which they had provided*. (2.) On the morrow after the passover-sabbath they were to *wave the sheaf of first-fruits before the Lord*, Lev. 23:10, 11. And this they were particularly ordered to do when they *came into the land which God would give them*: and they were furnished for this with the *fruit of the*

land that year (v. 12), which was then growing and beginning to be ripe. Thus they were well provided for, both with *old and new corn, as good householders*. See Mt. 13:52. And as soon as ever the fruits of this good land came to their hands they had an opportunity of honouring God with them, and employing them in his service according to his appointment. And thus, *behold, all things were clean and comfortable to them*. Calvin is of opinion that they had kept the passover every year in its season during their wandering in the wilderness, though it is not mentioned, and that God dispensed with their being uncircumcised, as he did, notwithstanding that, admit them to offer other sacrifices. but some gather from Amos v. 25 that after the sentence passed upon them there were no sacrifices offered till they came to Canaan, and consequently no passover was kept. And it is observable that after that sentence (Num. 14) the law which follows (Num. 15) concerning sacrifices begins thus: "*When you shall have come into the land of your habitations*" you shall do so and so.

2. Notice is taken of the ceasing of the manna as soon as ever they had eaten the *old corn of the land*, (1.) To show that it did not come by chance or common providence, as snow or hail does, but by the special designation of divine wisdom and goodness; for, as it came just when they needed it, so it continued as long as they had occasion for it and no longer. (2.) To teach us not to expect extraordinary supplies when supplies may be had in an ordinary way. If God had dealt with Israel according to their deserts, the manna would have ceased when they called it light bread; but as long as they needed it God continued it, though they despised it; and now that they needed it not God withdrew it, though perhaps some of them desired it. He is a wise Father, who knows the necessities of his children, and accommodates his gifts to *them*, not to their humours. The word and ordinances of God are spiritual manna, with which God nourishes his people in this wilderness, and, though often forfeited, yet they are continued while we are here; but when we come to the heavenly Canaan this manna will cease, for we shall no longer have need of it.

Verses 13-15

We have hitherto found God often speaking to Joshua, but we read not till now of any appearance of God's glory to him; now that his difficulties increased his encouragements were increased in proportion. Observe,

I. The time when he was favoured with this vision. It was immediately after he had performed the great solemnities of circumcision and the passover; then God made himself known to him. Note, We may then expect the discoveries of the divine grace when we are found in the way of our duty and are diligent and sincere in our attendance on holy ordinances.

II. The place where he had this vision. It was *by Jericho; in Jericho*, so the word is; in it by faith and hope, though as yet he had not begun to lay siege to it; in it in thought and expectation; or in the fields of Jericho, hard by the city. There, it should seem, he was all alone, fearless of danger, because sure of the divine protection. There he was (some think) meditating and praying; and to those who are so employed God often graciously manifests himself. Or perhaps there he was to take a view of the city, to observe its fortifications, and contrive how to attack it; and perhaps he was at a loss within himself how to make his approaches, when God came and directed him. Note, God will *help those that help themselves*. *Vigilantibus non dormientibus succurrit lex*—*The law succours those who watch, not those who sleep*. Joshua was in his post as a general, when God came and made himself known as Generalissimo.

III. The appearance itself. Joshua, as is usual with those that are full of thought and care, was looking downwards, his eyes fixed on the ground, when of a sudden he was surprised with the appearance of a man who stood before him at some little distance, which obliged him to lift up his eyes, and gave a diversion to his musings, v. 13. He appeared to him as a man, but a considerable man, and one fit to be taken notice of. Now, 1. We have reason to think that this man was the Son of God, the eternal Word, who, before he assumed the human nature for a perpetuity, frequently appeared in a human shape. So bishop Patrick thinks, consonant to the judgment of the fathers. Joshua gave him divine honours, and he received them, which a created angel would not have done, and he is called *Jehovah*, ch. 6:2. 2. He here appeared as a soldier, with *his sword drawn in his hand*. To Abraham in his tent he appeared as a traveller; to Joshua in the field as a man of war. Christ will be to his people what their faith expects and desires. Christ had his sword drawn, which served, (1.) To justify the war Joshua was engaging in, and to show him that it was of God, who gave him commission to kill and slay. If the sovereign draw the sword, this proclaims war, and authorizes the subject to do so too. The sword is then well drawn when Christ *draws it, and gives the banner to those that fear him, to be displayed because of the truth*, Ps. 60:4. (2.) To encourage him to carry it on with vigour; for Christ's sword drawn in his hand denotes how ready he is for the defence and salvation of his people, who through him shall do valiantly. His sword turns every way.

IV. The bold question with which Joshua accosted him; he did not send a servant, but stepped up to him himself, and asked, *Art thou for us or for our adversaries?* which intimates his readiness to entertain him if he were for them, and to fight him if he were against them. This shows, 1. His great courage and resolution. He was not ruffled by the suddenness of the appearance, nor daunted with the majesty and bravery which no doubt appeared in the countenance of the person he saw; but, with a presence of mind that became so great a general, put this fair question to him. God had bidden Joshua be courageous, and by this it appears that he was so; for what God by his word requires of his people he does by his grace work in them. 2. His great concern for the people and their cause; so heartily has he embarked in the interests of Israel that none shall stand by him with the face of a man but he will know whether he be a friend or a foe. It should seem, he suspected him for an enemy, a Goliath that had come to *defy the armies of the living God*, and to give him a challenge. Thus apt are we to look upon that as against us which is most for us. The question plainly implies that the cause between the Israelites and the Canaanites, between Christ and Beelzebub, will not admit of a neutrality. *He that is not with us is against us*.

V. The account he gave of himself, v. 14. "Nay, not for your adversaries, you may be sure, but *as captain of the host of the Lord have I now come*, not only for you as a friend, but over you as commander in chief." Here were now, as of old (Gen. 32:2), *Mahanaim, two hosts*, a host of Israelites ready to engage the Canaanites and a host of angels to protect them therein, and he, as captain of both, conducts the host of Israel and commands the host of angels to their assistance. Perhaps in allusion to this Christ is called the *captain of our salvation* (Heb. 2:10), *and a leader and commander to the people*, Isa. 55:4. Those cannot but be victorious that have such a captain. He now came as captain to review the troops, to animate them, and to give the necessary orders for the besieging of Jericho.

VI. The great respect Joshua paid him when he understood who he was; it is probable that he perceived, not only by what he

said but by some other sensible indications, that he was a divine person, and not a man. 1. Joshua paid homage to him: He *fell on his face to the earth and did worship*. Joshua was himself general of the forces of Israel, and yet he was far from looking with jealousy upon this stranger, who produced a commission as captain of the Lord's host above him; he did not offer to dispute his claims, but cheerfully submitted to him as his commander. It will become the greatest of men to be humble and reverent in their addresses to God. 2. He begged to receive commands and directions from him: *What saith my Lord unto his servant?* His former question was not more bold and soldier-like than this was pious and saint-like; nor was it any disparagement to the greatness of Joshua's spirit thus to humble himself when he had to do with God: even crowned heads cannot bow to low before the throne of the Lord Jesus, who is *King of kings*, Ps. 2:10,11; 72:10, 11; Rev. 19:16. Observe, (1.) The relation he owns between himself and Christ, that Christ was his Lord and himself his servant and under his command, Christ his Captain and himself a soldier under him, to do as he is bidden, Mt. 8:9. Note, The foundation of all acceptable obedience is laid in a sincere dedication of ourselves, as servants to Jesus Christ as *our Lord*, Ps. 16:2. (2.) The enquiry he makes pursuant to this relation: *What saith my Lord?* which implies an earnest desire to know the will of Christ, and a cheerful readiness and resolution to do it. Joshua owns himself an inferior officer, and stands to receive orders. This temper of mind shows him fit for the post he was in; for those know best how to command that know how to obey.

VII. The further expressions of reverence which this divine captain required from Joshua (v. 15): *Loose thy shoe from off thy foot*, in token of reverence and respect (which with us are signified by uncovering the head), and as an acknowledgment of a divine presence, which, while it continued there, did in a manner sanctify the place and dignify it. We are accustomed to say of a person for whom we have a great affection that we love the very ground he treads upon; thus Joshua must show his reverence for this divine person, he must not tread the ground he stood on with his dirty shoes, Eccl. 5:1. Outward expressions of inward reverence, and a religious awe of God, well become us, and are required of us, whenever we approach to him in solemn ordinances. Bishop Patrick well observes here that the very same orders that God gave to Moses at the bush, when he was sending him to bring Israel out of Egypt (Ex. 3:5), he here gives to Joshua, for the confirming of his faith in the promise he had lately given him, that as he had been with Moses so he would be with him, ch. 1:5. Had Moses such a presence of God with him as, when it became sensible, sanctified the ground? So had Joshua.

And (*lastly*) Hereby he prepares him to receive the instructions he was about to give him concerning the siege of Jericho, which this captain of the Lord's host had now come to give Israel possession of.

Chapter 6

Joshua opened the campaign with the siege of Jericho, a city which could not trust so much to the courage of its people as to act offensively, and to send out its forces to oppose Israel's landing and encamping, but trusted so much to the strength of its walls as to stand upon its defence, and not to surrender, or desire conditions of peace. Now here we have the story of the taking of it, I. The directions and assurances which the captain of the Lord's host gave concerning it (v. 1-5). II. The trial of the people's patient obedience in walking round the city six days (v. 6-14). III. The wonderful delivery of it into their hands the seventh day, with a solemn charge to them to use it as a devoted thing (v. 15-21 and 24). IV. The preservation of Rahab and her relations (v. 22, 23, 25). V. A curse pronounced upon the man that should dare to rebuild this city (v. 26, 27). An abstract of this story we find among the trophies of faith, Heb. 11:30. "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days."

Verses 1-5

We have here a contest between God and the men of Jericho, and their different resolutions, upon which it is easy to say whose word shall prevail.

I. Jericho resolves Israel shall *not* be its master, v. 1. It was *straitly shut up, because of the children of Israel. It did shut up, and it was shut up* (so it is in the margin); it *did shut up* itself, being strongly fortified both by art and nature, and it *was shut up* by the obstinacy and resolution of the inhabitants, who agreed never to surrender nor so much as sound a parley; none went out as deserters or to treat of peace, nor were any admitted in to offer peace. Thus were they infatuated, and their hearts hardened to their own destruction—the miserable case and character of all those that *strengthen themselves against the Almighty*, Job 15:25.

II. God resolves Israel *shall* be its master, and that quickly, The captain of the Lord's host, here called *Jehovah*, taking notice how strongly Jericho was fortified and how strictly guarded, and knowing Joshua's thoughts and cares about reducing it, and perhaps his fears of a disgrace there and of stumbling at the threshold, gave him here all the assurance he could desire of success (v. 2): *See, I have given into thy hand Jericho.* Not, "*I will do it, but, I have done it; it is all thy own, as sure as if it were already in thy possession.*" It was designed that this city, being the first-fruits of Canaan, should be entirely devoted to God, and that neither Joshua nor Israel should ever be one mite the richer for it, and yet it is here said to be *given into their hand*; for we must reckon that most our own which we have an opportunity of honouring God with and employing in his service. Now. 1. The captain of the Lord's host gives directions how the city should be besieged. No trenches are to be opened, no batteries erected, nor battering rams drawn up, nor any military preparations made; but the ark of God must be carried by the priests round the city once a day for six days together, and seven times the seventh day, attended by the men of war in silence, the priests all the while blowing with trumpets of rams' horns, v. 3, 4. This was all they were to do. 2. He assures them that on the seventh day before night they should, without fail, be masters of the town. Upon a signal given, they must all shout, and immediately the wall should fall down, which would not only expose the inhabitants, but so dispirit them that they would

not be able to make any resistance, v. 5. God appointed this way, (1.) To magnify his own power, that he might be *exalted in his own strength* (Ps. 21:13), not in the strength of instruments. God would hereby yet further make bare his own almighty arm for the encouragement of Israel and the terror and confusion of the Canaanites. (2.) To put an honour upon his ark, the instituted token of his presence, and to give a reason for the laws by which the people were obliged to look upon it with the most profound veneration and respect. When, long after this, the ark was brought into the camp without orders from God, it was looked upon as a profanation of it, and the people paid dearly for their presumption, 1 Sa. 4:3, etc. but now that it was done by the divine appointment it was an honour to the ark of God, and a great encouragement to the faith of Israel. (3.) It was likewise to put honour upon the priests, who were appointed upon this occasion to carry the ark and sound the trumpets. Ordinarily the priests were excused from war, but that this privilege, with other honours and powers that the law had given them, might not be grudged them, in this service they are principally employed, and so the people are made sensible what blessings they were to the public and how well worthy of all the advantages conferred upon them. (4.) It was to try the faith, obedience, and patience, of the people, to try whether they would observe a precept which to human policy seemed foolish to obey and believe a promise which in human probability seemed impossible to be performed. They were also proved whether they could patiently bear the reproaches of their enemies and patiently wait for the salvation of the Lord. Thus by faith, not by force, the walls of Jericho fell down. (5.) It was to encourage the hope of Israel with reference to the remaining difficulties that were before them. That suggestion of the evil spies that Canaan could never be conquered because the cities were *walled up to heaven* (Deu. 1:28) would by this be for ever silenced. The strongest and highest walls cannot hold out against Omnipotence; they needed not to fight, and therefore needed not to fear, because God fought for them.

Verses 6-16

We have here an account of the cavalcade which Israel made about Jericho, the orders Joshua gave concerning it, as he had received them from the Lord and their punctual observance of these orders. We do not find that he gave the people the express assurances God had given him that he would deliver the city into their hands; but he tried whether they would obey orders with a general confidence that it would end well, and we find them very observant both of God and Joshua.

I. Wherever the ark went the people attended it, v. 9. The armed men went before it to clear the way, not thinking it any disparagement to them, though they were men of war, to be pioneers to the ark of God. If any obstacle should be found in crossing the roads that led to the city (which they must do in walking round it) they would remove it; if any opposition should be made by the enemy, they would encounter it, that the priests' march with the ark might be easy and safe. It is an honour to the greatest men to do any good office to the ark and to serve the interests of religion in their country. The *rereward*, either another body of armed men, or Dan's squadron, which marched last through the wilderness, or, as some think, the multitude of the people who were not armed or disciplined for war (as many of them as would) followed the ark, to testify their respect to it, to grace the solemnity, and to be witnesses of what was done. Every faithful zealous Israelite would be willing to undergo the same fatigues and run the same hazard with the priests that bore the ark.

II. Seven priests went immediately before the ark, having trumpets in their hands, with which they were continually sounding,

v. 4, 5, 9, 13. The priests were God's ministers, and thus in his name, 1. They proclaimed war with the Canaanites, and so stuck a terror upon them; for by terrors upon their spirits they were to be conquered and subdued. Thus God's ministers, by the solemn declarations of his wrath against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, must blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in the holy mountain, that the sinners in Zion may be afraid. They are God's heralds to denounce war against all those that go on still in their trespasses, but say, "We shall have peace, though we go on." 2. They proclaimed God's gracious presence with Israel, and so put life and courage into them. It was appointed that when they went to war the priests should encourage them with the assurance of God's presence with them, Deu. 20:2-4. And particularly their blowing with trumpets was to be a sign to the people that they should be remembered before the Lord Their God in the day of battle, Num. 10:9. It encouraged Abijah, 2 Chr. 13:12. Thus God's ministers, by sounding the Jubilee trumpet of the everlasting gospel, which proclaims liberty and victory, must encourage the good soldiers of Jesus Christ in their spiritual warfare.

III. The trumpets they used were not those silver trumpets which were appointed to be made for their ordinary service, but trumpets of rams' horns, bored hollow for the purpose, as some think. These trumpets were of the basest matter, dullest sound, and least show, that the excellency of the power might be of God. Thus by the foolishness of preaching, fitly compared to the sounding of these rams' horns, the devil's kingdom is thrown down; and the *weapons of our warfare*, though they are not carnal nor seem to a carnal eye likely to bring any thing to pass, are yet *mighty through God to the pulling down of strong-holds*, 2 Co. 10:4, 5. The word here is *trumpets of Jubel*, that is, such trumpets as they used to blow withal in the year of jubilee; so many interpreters understand it, as signifying the complete liberty to which Israel was now brought, and the bringing of the land of Canaan into the hands of its just and rightful owners.

IV. All the people were commanded to be silent, not to speak a word, nor make any noise (v. 10), that they might the more carefully attend to the sound of the sacred trumpets, which they were now to look upon as the voice of God among them; and it does not become us to speak when God is speaking. It likewise intimates their reverent expectation of the event. *Zec. 2:13, Be silent, O all flesh, before the Lord. Ex. 14:14, God shall fight, and you shall hold your peace.*

V. They were to do this once a day for six days together and seven times the seventh day, and they did so, v. 14, 15. God could have caused the walls of Jericho to fall upon the first surrounding of them, but they must go round them thirteen times before they fall, that they might be kept waiting patiently for the Lord. Though they had lately come into Canaan, and their time was very precious (for they had a great deal of work before them), yet they must linger so many days about Jericho, seeming to do nothing, nor to make any progress in their business. As promised deliverances must be expected in God's way, so they must be expected in his time. *He that believes does not make haste*, not more haste than God would have him make. *Go yet seven times*, before any thing hopeful appears, 1 Ki. 18:43.

VI. One of these days must needs be a sabbath day, and the Jews say that it was the last, but this is not certain; however, if he that appointed them to rest on the other sabbath days appointed them to walk on this, that was sufficient to justify them in it; he never intended to bind himself by his own laws, but that when he pleased he might dispense with them. The impotent man went upon this principle when he argued (John v. 11), *He that made me whole* (and therefore has a divine power) *said unto me*,

Take up thy bed. And, in this case here, it was an honour to the sabbath day, by which our time is divided into weeks, that just seven days were to be spent in this work, and seven priests were employed to sound seven trumpets, this number being, on this occasion, as well as many others, made remarkable, in remembrance of the six day's work of creation and the seventh day's rest from it. And, besides, the law of the sabbath forbids our own work, which is servile and secular, but this which they did was a religious act. It is certainly no breach of the sabbath rest to do the sabbath work, for the sake of which the rest was instituted; and what is the sabbath work but to attend the ark in all its motions?

VII. They continued to do this during the time appointed, and seven times the seventh day, though they saw not any effect of it, believing that *at the end the vision would speak and not lie*, Hab. 2:3. If we persevere in the way of duty, we shall lose nothing by it in the long run. It is probable they walked at such a distance from the walls as to be out of the reach of the enemies' arrows and out of the hearing of their scoffs. We may suppose the oddness of the thing did at first amuse the besieged, but by the seventh day they had grown secure, feeling no harm from that which perhaps they looked upon as an enchantment. Probably they bantered the besiegers, as those mentioned in Neh. 4:2, "*What do these feeble Jews? Is this the people we thought so formidable? Are these their methods of attack?*" Thus they cried peace and safety, that the destruction might be the more terrible when it came. *Wicked men* (says bishop Hall) *think God in jest when he is preparing for their judgment*; but they will be convinced of their mistake when it is too late.

VIII. At last they were to give a shout, and did so, and immediately the walls fell, v. 16. This was a shout for mastery, a triumphant shout; the *shout of a king is among them*, Num. 23:21. This was a shout of faith; they believed that the walls of Jericho would fall, and by this faith the walls were thrown down. It was a shout of prayer, an echo to the sound of the trumpets which proclaimed the promise that God would remember them; with one accord, as one man, they cry to heaven for help, and help comes in. Some allude to this to show that we must never expect a complete victory over our own corruptions till the very evening of our last day, and then we shall shout in triumph over them, *when we come to the number and measure of our perfection*, as bishop Hall expresses it. *A good heart* (says he) *groans under the sense of his infirmities, fain would be rid of them, and strives and prays, but, when all is done, until the end of the seventh day it cannot be*; then judgment shall be brought forth unto victory. And at the end of time, when our Lord shall descend from heaven with a shout, and the sound of a trumpet, Satan's kingdom shall be completely ruined, and not till then, when all opposing rule, principality, and power, shall be effectually and eternally put down.

Verses 17-27

The people had religiously observed the orders given them concerning the besieging of Jericho, and now at length Joshua had told them (v. 16), "*The Lord hath given you the city, enter and take possession.*" Accordingly in these verses we have,

I. The rules they were to observe in taking possession. God gives it to them, and therefore may direct it to what uses and intents, and clog it with what provisos and limitations he thinks fit. It is given to them to be devoted to God, as the first and perhaps the worst of all the cities of Canaan. 1. The city must be burnt, and all the lives in it sacrificed without mercy to the justice of God. All this they knew was included in those words, v. 17. The city shall be a *cherem*, a devoted thing, at and all

therein, to the Lord. No life in it might be ransomed upon any terms; they must all be surely *put to death*, Lev. 27:29. So he appoints from whom as creatures they had received their lives, and to whom as sinners they had forfeited them; and who may dispute his sentence? *Is God unrighteous, who thus taketh vengeance?* God forbid we should entertain such a thought! There was more of God seen in the taking of Jericho than of any other of the cities of Canaan, and therefore that must be more than any other devoted to him. And the severe usage of this city would strike a terror upon all the rest and melt their hearts yet more before Israel. Only, when this severity is ordered, Rahab and her family are excepted: *She shall live and all that are with her*. She had distinguished herself from her neighbours by the kindness she showed to Israel, and therefore shall be distinguished from them by the speedy return of that kindness. 2. All the treasure of it, the money and plate and valuable goods, must be consecrated to the service of the tabernacle, and brought into the stock of dedicated things, the Jews say because the city was taken on the sabbath day. Thus God would be honoured by the beautifying and enriching of his tabernacle; thus preparation was made for the extraordinary expenses of his service; and thus the Israelites were taught not to set their hearts upon worldly wealth nor to aim at heaping up abundance of it for themselves. God had promised them a land *flowing with milk and honey*, not a land abounding with silver and gold; for he would have them live comfortably in it, that they might serve him cheerfully, but not covet either to trade with distant countries or to hoard for after times. He would likewise have them to reckon themselves enriched in the enriching of the tabernacle, and to think that which was laid up in God's house as truly their honour and wealth as if it had been laid up in their own. 3. A particular caution is given them to take heed of meddling with the forbidden spoil; for what was devoted to God, if they offered to appropriate it to their own use, would prove accursed to them; therefore (v. 18) *"In any wise keep yourselves from the accursed thing; you will find yourselves inclined to reach towards it, but check yourselves, and frighten yourselves from having any thing to do with it."* He speaks as if he foresaw the sin of Achan, which we have an account of in the next chapter, when he gives this reason for the caution, *lest you make the camp of Israel a curse and trouble it*, as it proved that Achan did.

II. The entrance that was opened to them into the city by the sudden fall of the walls, or at least that part of the wall over against which they then were when they gave the shout (v. 20): *The wall fell down flat*, and probably killed abundance of people, the guards that stood sentinel upon it, or others that crowded about it, to look at the Israelites that were walking round. We read of thousands killed by the fall of a wall, 1 Ki. 20:30. that which they trusted to for defence proved their destruction. The sudden fall of the wall, no doubt, put the inhabitants into such a consternation that they had no strength nor spirit to make any resistance, but they became an easy prey to the sword of Israel, and saw to how little purpose it was to shut their gates against a people that had *the Lord on the head of them*, Mic. 2:13. Note, The God of heaven easily can, and certainly will, break down all the opposing power of his and his church's enemies. Gates of brass and bars of iron are, before him, but as straw and rotten wood, Isa. 45:1, 2. *Who will bring me into the strong city? Wilt not thou, O God?* Ps. 60:9, 10. Thus shall Satan's kingdom fall, nor shall any prosper that harden themselves against God.

III. The execution of the orders given concerning this devoted city. All that breathed were put to the sword; not only the men that were found in arms, but the women, and children, and old people. Though they cried for quarter, and begged ever so

earnestly for their lives, there was no room for compassion, pity must be forgotten: they *utterly destroyed all*, v. 21. If they had not had a divine warrant under the seal of miracles for this execution, it could not have been justified, nor can it justify the like now, when we are sure no such warrant can be produced. But, being appointed by the righteous Judge of heaven and earth to do it, who is not unrighteous in taking vengeance, they are to be applauded in doing it as the faithful ministers of his justice. Work for God was then bloody work; and *cursed was he that did it deceitfully, keeping back his sword from blood*, Jer. 48:10. But the spirit of the gospel is very different, for Christ came not to destroy men's lives but to save them, Lu. 9:56. Christ's victories were of another nature. The cattle were put to death with the owners, as additional sacrifices to the divine justice. The cattle of the Israelites, when slain at the altar, were accepted as sacrifices *for* them, but the cattle of these Canaanites were required to be slain as sacrifices *with* them, for their iniquity was not to be purged with sacrifice and offering: both were for the glory of God. 2. The city was *burnt with fire, and all that was in it*, v. 24. The Israelites, perhaps, when they had taken Jericho, a large and well-built city, hoped they should have that for their head-quarters; but God will have them yet to dwell in tents, and therefore fires this nest, lest they should nestle in it. 3. All the silver and gold, and all those vessels which were capable of being purified by fire, were brought into the treasury of the house of the Lord; not that he needed it but that he would be honoured by it, as the Lord of hosts, of their hosts in particular, the God that gave the victory and therefore might demand the spoil, either the whole, as here, or, as sometimes, a tenth, Heb. 7:4.

IV. The preservation of Rahab the harlot, or inn-keeper, who *perished not with those that believed not*, Heb. 11:31. The public faith was engaged for her safety by the two spies, who acted therein as public persons; and therefore, though the hurry they were in at the taking of the town was no doubt very great, yet Joshua took effectual care for her preservation. The same persons that she had secured were employed to secure her, v. 22, 23. They were best able to do it who knew her and her house, and they were fittest to do it, that it might appear it was for the sake of her kindness to them that she was thus distinguished and had her life given her for a prey. All her kindred were saved with her; like Noah she *believed to the saving of her house*; and thus faith in Christ *brings salvation to the house*, Acts 16:31. Some ask how her house, which is said to have been *upon the wall* (ch. 2:15), escaped falling with the wall; we are sure it did escape, for she and her relations were safe in it, either though it joined so near to the wall as to be said to be *upon it*, yet it was so far off as not to fall either with the wall or under it; or, rather, that part of the wall on which her house stood fell not. Now being preserved alive, 1. She was left for some time without the camp to be purified from the Gentile superstition, which she was to renounce, and to be prepared for her admission as a proselyte. 2. She was in due time incorporated with the church of Israel, and she and her posterity dwelt in Israel, and her family was remarkable long after. We find her the wife of Salmon, prince of Judah, mother of Boaz, and named among the ancestors of our Saviour, Mt. 1:5. Having received Israelites in the name of Israelites, she had an Israelite's reward. Bishop Pierson observes that Joshua's saving Rahab the harlot, and admitting her into Israel, were a figure of Christ's receiving into his kingdom, and entertaining there, the publicans and the harlots, Mt. 21:31. Or it may be applied to the conversion of the Gentiles.

V. Jericho is condemned to a perpetual desolation, and a curse pronounced upon the man that at any time hereafter should offer

to rebuild it (v. 26): *Joshua adjured them*, that is, the elders and people of Israel, not only by their own consent, obliging themselves and their posterity never to rebuild this city, but by the divine appointment, God himself having forbidden it under the sever penalty here annexed. 1. God would hereby show the weight of a divine curse; where it rests there is no contending with it nor getting from under it; it brings ruin without remedy or repair. 2. He would have it to remain in its ruins a standing monument of his wrath against the Canaanites when the measure of their iniquity was full, and of his mercy to his people when the time had come for their settlement in Canaan. The desolations of their enemies were witnesses of his favour to them, and would upbraid them with their ingratitude to that God who had done so much for them. The situation of the city was very pleasant, and probably its nearness to Jordan was an advantage to it, which would tempt men to build upon the same spot; but they are here told it is at their peril if they do it. Men build for their posterity, but he that builds Jericho shall have no posterity to enjoy what he builds; his eldest son shall die when he begins the work, and if he take not warning by that stroke to desist, but will go on presumptuously, the finishing of his work shall be attended with the funeral of his youngest, and we must suppose all the rest cut off between. This curse, not being a *curse causeless*, did come upon that man who long after rebuilt Jericho (1 Ki. 16:34), but we are not to think it made the place ever the worse when it was built, or brought any hurt to those that inhabited it. We find Jericho afterwards graced with the presence, not only of those two great prophets Elijah and Elisha, but of our blessed Saviour himself, Lu. 18:35; 19:1; Mt. 20:29. Note, It is a dangerous thing to attempt the building up of that which God will have to be destroyed. See Mal. 1:4.

Lastly, All this magnified Joshua and raised his reputation (v. 27); it made him not only acceptable to Israel, but formidable to the Canaanites, because it appeared that God was with him of a truth: the Word of the Lord was with him, so the Chaldee, even Christ himself, the same that was with Moses. Nothing can more raise a man's reputation, nor make him appear more truly great, than to have the evidences of God's presence with him.

Chapter 7

More than once we have found the affairs of Israel, even when they were in the happiest posture and gave the most hopeful prospects, perplexed and embarrassed by sin, and a stop thereby put to the most promising proceedings. The golden calf, the murmuring at Kadesh, and the iniquity of Peor, had broken their measures and given them great disturbance; and in this chapter we have such another instance of the interruption given to the progress of their arms by sin. But it being only the sin of one person or family, and soon expiated, the consequences were not so mischievous as of those other sins; however it served to let them know that they were still upon their good behaviour. We have here, I. The sin of Achan in meddling with the accursed thing (v. 1). II. The defeat of Israel before Ai thereupon (v. 2-5). III. Joshua's humiliation and prayer on occasion of that sad disaster (v. 6-9). IV. The directions God gave him for the putting away of the guilt which had provoked God thus to contend with them (v. 10-15). V. The discovery, trial, conviction, condemnation, and execution, of the criminal, by which the anger of God was turned away (v. 16-26). And by this story it appears that, as the laws, so Canaan itself, "made nothing perfect," the perfection both of holiness and peace to God's Israel is to be expected in the heavenly Canaan only.

Verses 1-5

The story of this chapter begins with a *but*. *The Lord was with Joshua, and his fame was noised through all that country*, so the foregoing chapter ends, and it left no room to doubt but that he would go on as he had begun *conquering and to conquer*. He did right, and observed his orders in every thing. *But the children of Israel committed a trespass*, and so set God against them; and then even Joshua's name and fame, his wisdom and courage, could do them no service. If we lose our God, we lose our friends, who cannot help us unless God be for us. Now here is,

I. Achan sinning, v. 1. Here is only a general mention made of the sin; we shall afterwards have a more particular account of it from his own mouth. The sin is here said to be *taking of the accursed thing*, in disobedience to the command and in defiance of the threatening, ch. 6:18. In the sacking of Jericho orders were given that they should neither spare any lives nor take any treasure to themselves; we read not of the breach of the former prohibition (there were none to whom they showed any mercy), but of the latter: compassion was put off and yielded to the law, but covetousness was indulged. The love of the world is that root of bitterness which of all others is most hardly rooted up. Yet the history of Achan is a plain intimation that he of all the thousands of Israel was the only delinquent in this matter. Had there been more in like manner guilty, no doubt we should have heard of it: and it is strange there were no more. The temptation was strong. It was easy to suggest what a pity it was that so many things of value should be burnt; to what purpose is this waste? In plundering cities, every man reckons himself entitled to what he can lay his hands on. It was easy to promise themselves secrecy and impunity. Yet by the grace of God such impressions were made upon the minds of the Israelites by the ordinances of God, circumcision and the passover, which they had lately been partakers of, and by the providences of God which had been concerning them, that they stood in awe of the divine precept and judgment, and generously denied themselves in obedience to their God. And yet, though it was a single person that sinned, the children of Israel are said *to commit the trespass*, because one of their body did it, and he was not as yet

separated from them, nor disowned by them. They did it, that is, by what Achan did guilt was brought upon the whole society of which he was a member. This should be a warning to us to take heed of sin ourselves, lest by it many be defiled or disquieted (Heb. 12:15), and to take heed of having fellowship with sinners, and of being in league with them, lest we share in their guilt. Many a careful tradesman has been broken by a careless partner. And it concerns us to watch over one another for the preventing of sin, because others' sins may redound to our damage.

II. The camp of Israel suffering for the same: *The anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel*; he saw the offence, though they did not, and takes a course to make them see it; for one way or other, sooner or later, secret sins will be brought to light; and, if men enquire not after them, God will, and with his enquiries will awaken theirs. man a community is under guilt and wrath and is not aware of it till the fire breaks out: here it broke out quickly. 1. Joshua sends a detachment to seize upon the next city that was in their way, and that was Ai. Only 3000 men were sent, advice being brought him by his spies that the place was inconsiderable, and needed no greater force for the reduction of it, v. 2, 3. Now perhaps it was a culpable assurance, or security rather that led them to send so small a party on this expedition; it might also be an indulgence of the people in the love of ease, for they will not have all *the people to labour thither*. Perhaps the people were the less forward to go upon this expedition because they were denied the plunder of Jericho; and these spies were willing they should be gratified. Whereas when the town was to be taken, though God by his own power would throw down the walls, yet they must *all labour thither* and *labour there* too, in walking round it. It did not bode well at all that God's Israel began to think much of their labour, and contrived how to spare their pains. It is required that we *work out our salvation*, though it is *God that works in us*. It has likewise often proved of bad consequence to make too light of an enemy. *They are but few* (say the spies), but, as few as they were, they were too many for them. It will awaken our care and diligence in our Christian warfare to consider that *we wrestle with principalities and powers*. 2. The party he sent, in their first attack upon the town, were repulsed with some loss (v. 4, 5): *They fled before the men of Ai*, finding themselves unaccountably dispirited, and their enemies to sally out upon them with more vigour and resolution than they expected. In their retreat they had about thirty-six men cut off: no great loss indeed out of such a number, but a dreadful surprise to those who had no reason to expect any other in any attack than clear, cheap, and certain victory. And now, as it proves, it is well there were but 3000 that fell under this disgrace. Had the body of the army been there, they would have been no more able to keep their ground, now they were under guilt and wrath, than this small party, and to them the defeat would have been much more grievous and dishonourable. However, it was bad enough as it was, and served, (1.) To humble God's Israel, and to teach them always to *rejoice with trembling*. *Let not him that girdeth on the harness boast as he that putteth it off*. (2.) To harden the Canaanites, and to make them the more secure notwithstanding the terrors they had been struck with, that their ruin, when it came, might be the more dreadful. (3.) To be an evidence of God's displeasure against Israel, and a call to them to *purge out the old leaven*. And this was principally intended in their defeat. 3. The retreat of this party in disorder put the whole camp of Israel into a fright: *The hearts of the people melted*, not so much for the loss as for the disappointment. Joshua had assured them that *the living God would without fail drive out the Canaanites from before them*, ch. 3:10. How can this event be reconciled to that promise? To every thinking man among them it appeared

an indication of God's displeasure, and an omen of something worse, and therefore no marvel it put them into such a consternation; if *God turn to be their enemy and fight against them*, what will become of them? True Israelites tremble when God is angry.

Verses 6-9

We have here an account of the deep concern Joshua was in upon this sad occasion. He, as a public person, interested himself more than any other in this public loss, and is therein an example to princes and great men, and teaches them to lay much to heart the calamities that befall their people: he is also a type of Christ, to whom the blood of his subjects is precious, Ps. 72:14. Observe,

I. How he grieved: He *rent his clothes* (v. 6), in token of great sorrow for this public disaster, and especially a dread of God's displeasure, which was certainly the cause of it. Had it been but the common chance of war (as we are too apt to express it), it would not have become a general to droop thus under it; but, when God was angry, it was his duty and honour to feel thus. One of the bravest soldiers that ever was owned that his *flesh trembled for fear of God*, Ps. 119:120. As one *humbling himself under the mighty hand of God, he fell to the earth upon his face*, not thinking it any disparagement to him to lie thus low before the great God, to whom he directed this token of reverence, by keeping his eye towards *the ark of the Lord*. The elders of Israel, being interested in the cause and influenced by his example, prostrated themselves with him, and, in token of deep humiliation, *put dust upon their heads*, not only as mourners, but as penitents; not doubting but it was for some sin or other that God did thus contend with them (though they knew not what it was), they *humbled themselves* before God, and thus deprecated the progress of his wrath. This they continued *until even-tide*, to show that it was not the result of a sudden feeling, but proceeded from a deep conviction of their misery and danger if God were any way provoked to depart from them. Joshua did not fall foul upon his spies for their misinformation concerning the strength of the enemy, nor upon the soldiers for their cowardice, though perhaps both were blameworthy, but *his eye is up to God; for is there any evil in the camp and he has not done it?* His eye is upon God as displeased, and that troubles him.

II. How he prayed, or pleaded rather, humbly expostulating the case with God, not sullen, as David when *the Lord had made a breach upon Uzzah*, but much affected; his spirit seemed to be somewhat ruffled and discomposed, yet not so as to be put out of frame for prayer; but, by giving vent to his trouble in a humble address to God, he keeps his temper and it ends well. 1. Now he wishes they had all taken up with the lot of the two tribes on the other side Jordan, v. 7. He thinks it would have been better to have staid there and been cut short than come hither to be cut off. This savours too much of discontent and distrust of God, and cannot be justified, though the surprise and disappointment to one deeply concerned for the public interest may in part excuse it. Those words, *wherefore hast thou brought us over Jordan to destroy us?* are too like what the murmurers often said (Ex. 14:11, 12; 16:3; 17:3; Num. 14:2, 3); but he that searches the heart knew they came from another spirit, and therefore was not extreme to mark what he said amiss. Had Joshua considered that this disorder which their affairs were put into no doubt proceeded from something amiss, which yet might easily be redressed, and all set to rights again (as often in his predecessor's time), he would not have spoken of it as a thing taken for granted that they were *delivered into the hands of the Amorites to be*

destroyed. God knows what he does, though we do not; but this we may be sure of, he never did nor ever will do us any wrong. 2. He speaks as one quite at a loss concerning the meaning of this event (v. 8): "*What shall I say*, what construction can I put upon it, *when Israel*, thy own people, for whom thou hast lately done such great things and to whom thou hast promised the full possession of this land, when they *turn their backs before their enemies*" (their *necks*, so the word is), "when they not only flee before them, but fall before them, and become a prey to them? What shall we think of the divine power? Is the Lord's arm shortened? Of the divine promise? Is his word yea and nay? Of what God has done for us? Shall this be all undone again and prove in vain?" Note, The methods of Providence are often intricate and perplexing, and such as the wisest and best of men know not what to say to; but *they shall know hereafter*, Jn. 13:7. 3. He pleads the danger Israel was now in of being ruined. He gives up all for lost: "*The Canaanites will environ us round*, concluding that now our defence having departed, and the scales being turned in their favour, we shall soon be as contemptible as ever we were formidable, and they will *cut off our name from the earth*," v. 9. Thus even good men, when things go against them a little, are too apt to fear the worst, and make harder conclusions than there is reason for. But his comes in here as a plea: "Lord, let not Israel's name, which has been so dear to thee and so great in the world, be cut off." 4. He pleads the reproach that would be cast on God, and that if Israel were ruined his glory would suffer by it. They will *cut off our name*, says he, yet, as if he had corrected himself for insisting upon that, it is no great matter (thinks he) what becomes of our little name (the cutting off of that will be a small loss), but *what wilt thou do for thy great name?* this he looks upon and laments as the great aggravation of the calamity. He feared it would reflect on God, his wisdom and power, his goodness and faithfulness; what would the Egyptians say? Note, Nothing is more grievous to a gracious soul than dishonour done to God's name. This also he insists upon as a plea for the preventing of his fears and for a return of God's favour; it is the only word in all his address that has any encouragement in it, and he concludes with it, leaving it to this issue, *Father, glorify thy name*. The name of God is a great name, above every name; and, whatever happens, we ought to believe that he will, and pray that he would, work for his own name, that *this may not be polluted*. This should be our concern more than any thing else. On this we must fix our eye as the end of all our desires, and from this we must fetch our encouragement as the foundation of all our hopes. We cannot urge a better plea than this, Lord, *What wilt thou do for thy great name?* Let God in all be glorified, and then welcome his whole will.

Verses 10-15

We have here God's answer to Joshua's address, which, we may suppose, came from the oracle over the ark, before which Joshua had prostrated himself, v. 6. Those that desire to know the will of God must attend with their desires upon the lively oracles, and wait at wisdom's gates for wisdom's dictates, Prov. 8:34. And let those that find themselves under the tokens of God's displeasure never complain *of* him, but complain *to* him, and they shall receive an answer of peace. The answer came immediately, *while he was yet speaking* (Isa. 65:24), as that to Daniel, Dan. 9:20, etc.

I. God encourages Joshua against his present despondencies, and the black and melancholy apprehensions he had of the present posture of Israel's affairs (v. 10): "*Get thee up*, suffer not thy spirits to droop and sink thus; *wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face?*" No doubt Joshua did well to humble himself before God, and mourn as he did, under the tokens of his displeasure; but

now God told him it was enough, he would not have him continue any longer in that melancholy posture, for God delights not in the grief of penitents when they afflict their souls further than as it qualifies them for pardon and peace; the days even of that mourning must be ended. *Arise, shake thyself from the dust*, Isa. 53:2. Joshua continued his mourning *till eventide* (v. 6), so late that they could do nothing that night towards the discovery of the criminal, but were forced to put it off till next morning. Daniel (Dan. 9:21), and Ezra (Ezra 9:5, 6), continued their mourning only *till the time of the evening sacrifice*; that revived them both: but Joshua went past that time, and therefore is thus roused: "*Get thee up*, do not lie all night there." Yet we find that Moses fell down before the Lord forty days and forty nights, to make intercession for Israel, Deu. 9:18. Joshua must get up because he has other work to do than to lie there; the accursed thing must be discovered and cast out, and the sooner the better; Joshua is the man that must do it, and therefore it is time for him to lay aside his mourning weeds, and put on his judge's robes, and *clothe himself with zeal as a cloak*. Weeping must not hinder sowing, nor one duty of religion jostle out another. Every thing is beautiful in its season. Shechaniah perhaps had an eye to this in what he said to Ezra upon a like occasion. See Ezra 10:2-4.

II. He informs him of the true and only cause of this disaster, and shows him wherefore he contended with them (v. 11): *Israel hath sinned*. "Think not that God's mind is changed, his arm shortened, or his promise about to fail; no, it is sin, it is sin, that great mischief-maker, that has stopped the current of divine favours and has made this breach upon you." The sinner is not named, though the sin is described, but it is spoken of as the act of Israel in general, till they have fastened it upon the particular person, and their *godly sorrow* have so wrought a *clearing of themselves*, as theirs did, 2 Co. 7:11. Observe how the sin is here made to appear exceedingly sinful. 1. *They have transgressed my covenant*, an express precept with a penalty annexed to it. It was agreed that God should have all the spoil of Jericho, and they should have the spoil of the rest of the cities of Canaan; but, in robbing God of his part, they *transgressed this covenant*. 2. *They have even taken of the devoted thing*, in contempt of the curse which was so solemnly denounced against him that should dare to break in upon God's property, as if that curse had nothing in it formidable. 3. *They have also stolen*; they did it clandestinely, as if they could conceal it from the divine omniscience, and they were ready to say, *The Lord shall not see*, or will not miss so small a matter out of so great a spoil. Thus *thou thoughtest I was altogether such a one as thyself*. 4. They have *dissembled* also. Probably, when the action was over, Joshua called all the tribes, and asked them whether they had faithfully disposed of the spoil according to the divine command, and charged them, if they knew of any transgression, that they should discover it, but Achan joined with the rest in a general protestation of innocency, and kept his countenance, like the adulterous woman that *eats and wipes her mouth, and says, I have done no wickedness*. Nay, 5. They have put the accursed thing *among their own goods*, as if they had as good a title to that as to any thing they have, never expecting to be called to an account, nor designing to make restitution. All this Joshua, though a wise and vigilant ruler, knew nothing of, till God told him, who knows all the secret wickedness that is in the world, which men know nothing of God could at this time have told him who the person was that had done this thing, but he does not, (1.) To exercise the zeal of Joshua and Israel, in searching out the criminal. (2.) To give the sinner himself space to repent and make confession. Joshua no doubt proclaimed it immediately throughout the camp that there was such a

transgression committed, upon which, if Achan had surrendered himself, and penitently owned his guilt, and prevented the scrutiny, who knows but he might have had the benefit of that law which accepted of a trespass-offering, with restitution, from those that had *sinned through ignorance in the holy things of the law?* Lev. 5:15, 16. But Achan never discovering himself till the lot discovered him evidenced the hardness of his heart, and therefore he found no mercy.

III. He awakens him to enquire further into it, by telling him, 1. That this was the only ground for the controversy God had with them, this, and nothing else; so that when this accursed thing was put away he needed not fear, all would be well, the stream of their successes, when this one obstruction was removed, would run as strong as ever. 2. That if this accursed thing were not destroyed they could not expect the return of God's gracious presence; in plain terms, *neither will I be with you any more as I have been, except you destroy the accursed*, that is, the accursed person, who is made so by the accursed thing. That which is accursed will be destroyed; and those whom God has entrusted to bear the sword bear it in vain if they make it not a terror to that wickedness which brings these judgments of God on a land. By personal repentance and reformation, we destroy the accursed thing in our own hearts, and, unless we do this, we must never expect the favour of the blessed God. Let all men know that it is nothing but sin that separates between them and God, and, if it be not sincerely repented of and forsaken, it will separate eternally.

IV. He directs him in what method to make this enquiry and prosecution. 1. He must *sanctify the people*, now over-night, that is, as it is explained, he must command them to *sanctify themselves*, v. 13. And what can either magistrates or ministers do more towards sanctification? They must put themselves into a suitable frame to appear before God and submit to the divine scrutiny, must examine themselves, now that God was coming to examine them, must *prepare to meet their God*. They were called to sanctify themselves when they were to *receive the divine law* (Ex. 19), and now also when they were to *come under the divine judgment*; for in both God is to be attended with the utmost reverence. "There is *an accursed thing in the midst of you*, and therefore *sanctify yourselves*," that is, Let all that are innocent be able to clear themselves, and be the more careful to cleanse themselves. The sin of others may be improved by us as furtherances of our sanctification, as the scandal of the incestuous Corinthian occasioned a blessed reformation in that church, 2 Co. 7:11. 2. He must bring them all under the scrutiny of the lot (v. 14); the tribe which the guilty person was of should first be discovered by lot, then the family, then the household, and last of all the person. The conviction came upon him thus gradually that he might have some space given him to come in and surrender himself; for God is *not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance*. Observe, The Lord is said to take the tribe, and family, and household, on which the lot fell, because *the disposal of the lot is of the Lord*, and, however casual it seems, is under the direction of infinite wisdom and justice; and to show that when the sin of sinners finds them out God is to be acknowledged in it; it is he that seizes them, and the arrests are in his name. *God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants*, Gen. 44:16. It is also intimated with what a certain and unerring judgment the righteous God does and will distinguish between the innocent and the guilty, so that though for a time they seem involved in the same condemnation, as the whole tribe did when it was first taken by the lot, yet he who has his fan in his hand will effectually provide for the *taking out of the precious from the vile*; so that though the righteous be of the same tribe, and family, and household, with the

wicked, yet they shall never be treated *as the wicked*, Gen. 18:25. 3. When the criminal was found out he must be put to death *without mercy* (Heb. 10:28), and with all the expressions of a holy detestation, v. 15. He and all that he has must be burnt with fire, that there might be no remainders of the accursed thing among them; and the reason given for this severe sentence is because the criminal has, (1.) Given a great affront to God: He has *transgressed the covenant of the Lord*, who is jealous particularly for the honour of the holy covenant. (2.) He has done a great injury to the church of God: He has *wrought folly in Israel*, has shamed that nation which is looked upon by all its neighbours to be a *wise and understanding people*, has infected that nation which is sanctified to God, and troubled that nation of which he is the protector. These being crimes so heinous in their nature, and of such pernicious consequence and example, the execution, which otherwise would have come under the imputation of cruelty, is to be applauded as a piece of necessary justice. It was *sacrilege*; it was invading God's rights, alienating his property, and converting to a private use that which was devoted to his glory and appropriated to the service of his sanctuary—this was the crime to be thus severely punished, for warning to all people in all ages to take heed how they rob God.

Verses 16-26

We have in these verses,

I. The discovery of Achan by the lot, which proved a perfect lot, though it proceeded gradually. Though we may suppose that Joshua slept the better, and with more ease and satisfaction, when he knew the worst of the disease of that body of which, under God, he was the head, and was put into a certain method of cure, yet *he rose up early in the morning* (v. 16), so much was his heart upon it, to put away the accursed thing. We have found Joshua upon other occasions an early riser; here it shows his zeal and vehement desire to see Israel restored to the divine favour. In the scrutiny observe, 1. That the guilty tribe was that of Judah, which was, and was to be, of all the tribes, the most honourable and illustrious; this was an alloy to their dignity, and might serve as a check to their pride: many there were who were its glories, but here was one that was its reproach. Let not the best families think it strange if there be those found in them, and descending from them, that prove their grief and shame. Judah was to have the first and largest lot in Canaan; the more inexcusable is one of that tribe it, not content to wait for his own share, he break in upon God's property. The Jews' tradition is that when the tribe of Judah was taken the valiant men of that tribe drew their swords, and professed they would not sheathe them again till they saw the criminal punished and themselves cleared who knew their own innocency. 2. That the guilty person was at length fastened upon, and the language of the lot was, *Thou art the man*, v. 18. It was strange that Achan, being conscious to himself of guilt, when he saw the lot come nearer and nearer to him, had not either the wit to make an escape or the grace to make a confession; but *his heart was hardened through the deceitfulness of sin*, and it proved to be *to his own destruction*. We may well imagine how his countenance changed, and what horror and confusion seized him when he was singled out as the delinquent, when the eyes of all Israel were fastened upon him, and every one was ready to say, *Have we found thee, O our enemy?* See here, (1.) The folly of those that promise themselves secrecy in sin: the righteous God has many ways of bringing to light the hidden works of darkness, and so bringing to shame and ruin those that continue their fellowship with those unfruitful works. *A bird of the air*, when God pleases, shall

carry the voice, Eccl. 10:20. See Ps. 94:7, etc. (2.) How much it is our concern, when God is contending with us, to find out what the cause of action is, what the particular sin is, that, like Achan, troubles our camp. We must thus examine ourselves and carefully review the records of conscience, that we may find out the accursed thing, and pray earnestly with holy Job, *Lord, show me wherefore thou contendest with me*. Discover the traitor and he shall be no longer harboured.

II. His arraignment and examination, v. 19. Joshua sits judge, and, though abundantly satisfied of his guilt by the determination of the lot, yet urges him to make a penitent confession, that his soul might be saved by it in the other world, though he could not give him any encouragement to hope that he should save his life by it. Observe, 1. How He accosts him with the greatest mildness and tenderness that could be, like a true disciple of Moses. He might justly have called him "thief," and "rebel," "Raca," and "thou fool," but he call him "son;" he might have adjured him to confess, as the high priest did our blessed Saviour, or threatened him with the torture to extort a confession, but for love's sake he rather beseeches him: *I pray thee make confession*. This is an example to all not to insult over those that are in misery, though they have brought themselves into it by their own wickedness, but to treat even offenders with the spirit of meekness, not knowing, what we ourselves should have been and done if God had put us into the hands of our own counsels. It is likewise an example to magistrates, in executing justice, to govern their own passions with a strict and prudent hand, and never suffer themselves to be transported by them into any indecencies of behaviour or language, no, not towards those that have given the greatest provocations. *The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God*. Let them remember *the judgment is God's, who is Lord of his anger*. This is the likeliest method of bringing offenders to repentance. 2. What he wishes him to do, to confess the fact, to confess it to God, the party offended by the crime; Joshua was to him in god's stead, so that in confessing to him he confessed to God. Hereby he would satisfy Joshua and the congregation concerning that which was laid to his charge; his confession would also be an evidence of his repentance, and a warning to others to take heed of sinning after the similitude of his transgression: but that which Joshua aims at herein is that God might be honoured by it, as the Lord, the God of infinite knowledge and power, from whom no secrets are hid; and as the God of Israel, who, as he does particularly resent affronts given to his Israel, so he does the affronts given him by Israel. Note, In confessing sin, as we take shame to ourselves, so we give glory to God as righteous God, owning him justly displeased with us, and as a good God, who will not improve our confessions as evidences against us, but is faithful and just to forgive when we are brought to own that he would be faithful and just if he should punish. By sin we have injured God in his honour. Christ by his death has made satisfaction for the injury; but it is required that we by repentance show our good will to his honour, and, as far as in us lies, give glory to him. Bishop Patrick quotes the Samaritan chronicle, making Joshua to say here to Achan, *Lift up thy eyes to the king of heaven and earth, and acknowledge that nothing can be hidden from him who knoweth the greatest secrets*.

III. His confession, which now at last, when he saw it was to no purpose to conceal his crime, was free and ingenuous enough, v. 20, 21. Here is, 1. A penitent acknowledgment of fault. "Indeed I have sinned; what I am charged with is too true to be denied and too bad to be excused. I own it, I lament it; the Lord is righteous in bringing it to light, for indeed I have sinned." This is the language of a penitent that is sick of his, and whose conscience is loaded with it. "I have nothing to accuse any one

else of, but a great deal to say against myself; it is with me that the accursed thing is found; I am the man who has *perverted that which was right and it profited me not.*" And that wherewith he aggravates the sin is that it was committed *against the Lord God of Israel.* He was himself an Israelite, a sharer with the rest of that exalted nation in their privileges, so that, in offending *the God of Israel,* he offended his own God, which laid him under the guilt of the basest treachery and ingratitude imaginable. 2. A particular narrative of the fact: *Thus and thus have I done.* God had told Joshua in general that a part of the devoted things was alienated, but is to him to draw from Achan an account of the particulars; for, one way or other, God will make sinners' *own tongues to fall upon them* (Ps. 64:8); if ever he bring them to repentance, they will be their own accusers, and their awakened consciences will be instead of a thousand witnesses. Note, It becomes penitents, in the confession of their sins to God, to be very particular; not only, "I have sinned," but, "In this and that instance I have sinned," reflecting with regret upon all the steps that led to the sin and all the circumstances that aggravated it and made it exceedingly sinful: *thus and thus have I done.* He confesses, (1.) To the things taken. In plundering a house in Jericho he found a goodly Babylonish garment; the word signifies a robe, such as princes wore when they appeared in state, probably it belonged to the King of Jericho; it was far fetched, as we translate it, from Babylon. A garment of divers colours, so some render it. Whatever it was, in his eyes it made a very glorious show. "A thousand pities" (thinks Achan) "that it should be burnt; then it will do nobody any good; if I take it for myself, it will serve me many a year for my best garment." Under these pretences, he makes bold with this first, and thinks it no harm to save it from the fire; but, his hand being thus in, he proceeds to take a bag of money, *two hundred shekels,* that is one hundred ounces of silver, and a *wedge of gold* which weighed *fifty shekels,* that is twenty-five ounces. He could not plead that, in taking these, he saved them *from the fire* (for the *silver and gold* were to be laid up in *the treasury*); but those that make a slight excuse to serve in daring to commit one sin will have their hearts so hardened by it that they will venture upon the next without such an excuse; for the way of sin is downhill. See what a peer prize it was for which Achan ran this desperate hazard, and what an unspeakable loser he was by the bargain. See Mt. 16:26. (2.) He confesses the manner of taking them. [1.] the sin began in the eye. he saw these fine things, as Eve saw the forbidden fruit, and was strangely charmed with the sight. See what comes of suffering the heart to walk after the eyes, and what need we have to make this covenant with our eyes, that if they wander they shall be sure to weep for it. *Look not thou upon the wine that is red,* upon the woman that is fair; close the right eye that thus offend thee, to prevent the necessity of plucking it out, and casting it from thee, Mt. 5:28, 29. [2.] It proceeded out of the heart. He owns, *I coveted them.* thus lust conceived and brought forth this sin. Those that would be kept from sinful actions must mortify and check in themselves sinful desires, particularly the desire of worldly wealth, which we more particularly call *covetousness.* O what a world of evil is the love money the root of! Had Achan looked upon these things with an eye of faith, he would have seen them accursed things, and would have dreaded them, but, looking upon them with an eye of sense only, he saw them goodly things, and coveted them. It was not the looking, but the lusting that ruined him. [3.] When he had committed it he was very industrious to conceal it. Having taken of the forbidden treasures, fearing lest any search should be made for prohibited goods, he *hid them in the earth,* as one that resolved to keep what he had gotten, and never to make restitution. Thus does Achan confess the whole matter, that God might be justified in the sentence passed upon

him. See the *deceitfulness of sin*; that which is pleasing in the commission is bitter in the reflection; at the last it bites like a serpent. Particularly, see what comes of ill-gotten goods, and how those will be cheated that rob God. Job 20:15, *He hath swallowed down riches, and he shall vomit them up again.*

IV. His conviction. God had convicted him by the lot; he had convicted himself by his own confession; but, that no room might be left for the most discontented Israelite to object against the process, Joshua has him further convicted by the searching of his tent, in which the goods were found which he confessed to. Particular notice is taken of the haste which the messengers made that were sent to search: They *ran to the tent* (v. 22), not only to show their readiness to obey Joshua's orders, but to show how uneasy they were till the camp was cleared of the accursed thing, that they might regain the divine favour. Those that feel themselves under wrath find themselves concerned not to defer the putting away of sin. Delays are dangerous, and it is not time to trifle. When the stolen goods were brought they were *laid out before the Lord* (v. 23), that all Israel might see how plain the evidence was against Achan, and might adore the strictness of God's judgments in punishing so severely the stealing of such small things, and yet the justice of his judgments in maintaining his right to devoted things, and might be afraid of ever offending in the like kind. In laying them out before the Lord they acknowledged his title to them, and waited to receive his directions concerning them. Note, Those that think to put a cheat upon God do but deceive themselves; what is taken from him he will recover (Hos. 2:9) and he will be a loser by no man at last.

V. His condemnation. Joshua passes sentence upon him (v. 25): *Why hast thou troubled us?* There is the ground of the sentence. *O, how much hast thou troubled us!* so some read it. He refers to what was said when the warning was given not to meddle with the accursed thing (ch. 6:18), *lest you make the camp of Israel a curse and trouble it.* Note, Sin is a very troublesome thing, not only to the sinner himself, but to all about him. *He that is greedy of gain*, as Achan was, *troubles his own house* (Prov. 15:27) and all the communities he belongs to. Now (says Joshua) *God shall trouble thee.* See why Achan was so severely dealt with, not only because he had robbed God, but because he had troubled Israel; over his head he had (as it were) this accusation written, "Achan, *the troubler of Israel,*" as Ahab, 1 Ki. 18:18. This therefore is his doom: *God shall trouble thee.* Note, the righteous God will certainly *recompense tribulation to those that trouble his people*, 2 Th. 1:6. Those that are troublesome shall be troubled. Some of the Jewish doctors, from that word which determines the troubling of him to *this day*, infer that therefore he should not be troubled in the world to come; the flesh was destroyed that spirit might be saved, and, if so, the dispensation was really less severe than it seemed. In the description both of his sin and of his punishment, by the trouble that was in both, there is a plain allusion to his name Achan, or, as he is called, 1 Chr. 2:7, *Achar*, which signifies *trouble*. He did too much answer his name.

VI. His execution. No reprieve could be obtained; a gangrened member must be cut off immediately. When he is proved to be an anathema, and the troubler of the camp, we may suppose all the people cry out against him, *Away with him, away with him! Stone him, stone him!* Here is,

1. The place of execution. They brought him out of the camp, in token of their putting *far from them that wicked person*, 1 Co. 5:13. When our Lord Jesus was made a curse for us, that by his trouble we might have peace, he suffered as an accursed thing

without the gate, bearing our reproach, Heb. 13:12, 13. The execution was at a distance, that the camp which was disturbed by Achan's sin might not be defiled by his death.

2. The persons employed in his execution. It was the act of all Israel, v. 24, 25. They were all spectators of it, that they might see and fear. Public executions are public examples. Nay, they were all consenting to his death, and as many as could were active in it, in token of the universal detestation in which they held his sacrilegious attempt, and their dread of God's displeasure against them.

3. The partakers with him in the punishment; for *he perished not alone in his iniquity*, ch. 22:20. (1.) The stolen goods were destroyed with him, the garment burnt, as it should have been with the rest of the combustible things in Jericho, and the silver and gold defaced, melted, lost, and buried, in the ashes of the rest of his goods under *the heap of stones*, so as never to be put to any other use. (2.) All his other goods were destroyed likewise, not only his tent, and the furniture of that, but his *oxen, asses, and sheep*, to show that goods gotten unjustly, especially if they be gotten by sacrilege, will not only turn to no account, but will blast and waste the rest of the possessions to which they are added. The eagle in the fable, that stole flesh from the altar, brought a coal of fire with it, which burnt her nest, Hab. 2:9, 10; Zec. 5:3, 4. Those lose their own that grasp at more than their own. (3.) His sons and daughters were put to death with him. Some indeed think that they were *brought out* (v. 24) only to be the spectators of their father's punishment, but most conclude that they died with him, and that they must be meant v. 25, where it is said they *burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones*. God had expressly provided that magistrates should not put the children to death for the fathers'; but he did not intend to bind himself by that law, and in this case he had expressly ordered (v. 15) that the criminal, and all that he had, should be burnt. Perhaps his sons and daughters were aiders and abettors in the villany, had helped to carry off the accursed thing. It is very probable that they assisted in the concealment, and that he could not hide them in the midst of his tent but they must know and keep his counsel, and so they became accessaries *ex post facto*—*after the fact*; and, if they were ever so little partakers in the crime, it was so heinous that they were justly sharers in the punishment. However God was hereby glorified, and the judgment executed was thus made the more tremendous.

4. The punishment itself that was inflicted on him. He was stoned (some think as a sabbath breaker, supposing that the sacrilege was committed on the sabbath day), and then his dead body was burnt, as an accursed thing, of which there should be no remainder left. The concurrence of all the people in this execution teaches us how much it is the interest of a nation that all in it should contribute what they can, in their places, to the suppression of vice and profaneness, and the reformation of manners; *sin is a reproach to any people*, and therefore every Israelite indeed will have a stone to throw at it.

5. The pacifying of God's wrath hereby (v. 26): *The Lord turned from the fierceness of his anger*. The putting away of sin by true repentance and reformation, as it is the only way, so it is a sure and most effectual way, to recover the divine favour. Take away the cause, and the effect will cease.

VII. The record of his conviction and execution. Care was taken to preserve the remembrance of it, for warning and instruction to posterity. 1. A heap of stones was raised on the place where Achan was executed, every one perhaps of the congregation

throwing a stone to the heap, in token of his detestation of the crime. 2. A new name was given to the place; it was called the *Valley of Achor*, or *trouble*. This was a perpetual brand of infamy upon Achan's name, and a perpetual warning to all people not to invade God's property. By this severity against Achan, the honour of Joshua's government, now in the infancy of it, was maintained, and Israel, at their entrance upon the promised Canaan, were reminded to observe, at their peril, the provisos and limitations of the grant by which they held it. The *Valley of Achor* is said to be given for a *door of hope*, because when we put away the accursed thing then there begins to be hope in Israel, Hos. 2:15; Ezra 10:2.

Chapter 8

The embarrassment which Achan's sin gave to the affairs of Israel being over, we have them here in a very good posture again, the affairs both of war and religion. Here is, I. The glorious progress of their arms in the taking of Ai, before which they had lately suffered disgrace. 1. God encourages Joshua to attack it, with the assurance of success, and directs him what method to take (v. 1, 2). 2. Joshua gives orders accordingly to the men of war (v. 3-8). 3. The stratagem is managed as it was projected, and succeeds as it was desired (v. 9–22). 4. Joshua becomes master of this city, puts all the inhabitants to the sword, burns it, hangs the king, but gives the plunder to the soldiers (v. 23–29). II. The great solemnity of writing and reading the law before a general assembly of all Israel, drawn up for that purpose upon the two mountains of Gerizim and Ebal, according to an order which Moses had received from the Lord, and delivered to them (v. 30–35). Thus did they take their work before them, and make the business of their religion to keep pace with their secular business.

Verses 1-2

Israel were very happy in having such a commander as Joshua, but Joshua was more happy in having such a director as God himself; when any difficulty occurred, he needed not to call a council of war who had *God so nigh unto him*, not only to answer, but even to anticipate, his enquiries. It should seem, Joshua was now at a stand, had scarcely recovered the discomposure he was put into by the trouble Achan gave them, and could not think, without fear and trembling, of pushing forward, lest there should be in the camp another Achan; then God spoke to him, either by vision, as before (ch. 5), or by the breastplate of judgment. Note, When we have faithfully put away sin, that accursed thing, which *separates between us and God*, then, and not till then, we may expect to hear from God to our comfort; and God's directing us how to go on in our Christian work and warfare is a good evidence of his being reconciled to us. Observe here,

I. The encouragement God gives to Joshua to proceed: *Fear not, neither be thou dismayed*, v. 1. This intimates that the sin of Achan, and the consequences of it, had been a very great discouragement to Joshua, and made his heart almost ready to fail. Corruptions within the church weaken the hands, and damp the spirits, of her guides and helpers, more than oppositions from without; treacherous Israelites are to be dreaded more than malicious Canaanites. But God bids Joshua not be dismayed; the same power that keeps Israel from being ruined by their enemies shall keep them from ruining themselves. To animate him, 1. He assures him of success against Ai, tells him it is all his own; but he must take it as god's gift: *I have given it into thy hands*, which secured him both title and possession, and obliged him to give God the glory of both, Ps. 44:3. 2. He allows the people to take the spoil to themselves. Here the spoil was not consecrated to God as that of Jericho, and therefore there was no danger of the people's committing such a trespass as they had committed there. Observe, How Achan who caught at forbidden spoil lost that, and life, and all, but the rest of the people who had conscientiously refrained from the accursed thing were quickly recompensed for their obedience with the spoil of Ai. the way to have the comfort of what God allows us is to forbear what he forbids us. No man shall lose by his self-denial; let God have his dues first, and then all will be clean to us and sure, 1 Ki. 17:13. God did not bring them to these *goodly cities, and houses filled with all good things*, to tantalize them with the sight of

that which they might not touch; but, having received the first-fruits from Jericho, the spoil of Ai, and of all the cities which thenceforward came into their hands, they might take for a prey to themselves.

II. The direction he gives him in attacking Ai. It must not be such a work of time as the taking of Jericho was; this would have prolonged the war too much. Those that had patiently waited seven days for Jericho shall have Ai given them in one day. Nor was it, as that, to be taken by miracle, and purely by the act of God, but now their own conduct and courage must be exercised; having seen God work for them, they must now bestir themselves. God directs him, 1. to take all the people, that they might all be spectators of the action and sharers in the spoil. Hereby God gave him a tacit rebuke for sending so small a detachment against Ai in the former attempt upon it, ch. 7:4. 2. To lay an ambush behind the city; this was a method which perhaps Joshua would not have thought of at this time, if God had not directed him to it; and though now we are not to expect direction, as here, by visions, voices, or oracles, yet, whenever those who are entrusted with public councils take prudent measures for the public good, it must be acknowledged that God puts it into their hearts; he that teaches the husbandman discretion no doubt teaches statesman and general.

Verses 3-22

We have here an account of the taking of Ai by stratagem. The stratagem here used, we are sure, was lawful and good; God himself appointed it, and we have no reason to think but that the like is lawful and good in other wars. Here was no league broken, no treaty of peace, that the advantage was gained; no, these are sacred things, and not to be jested with, nor used to serve a turn; truth, when once it is plighted, becomes a debt even to the enemy. But in this stratagem here was no untruth told; nothing was concealed but their own counsels, which no enemy ever pretended a right to be entrusted with; nothing was dissembled, nothing counterfeited but a retreat, which was no natural or necessary indication at all of their inability to maintain their onset, or of any design not to renew it. The enemy ought to have been upon their guard, and to have kept within the defence of their own walls. Common prudence, had they been governed by it, would have directed them not to venture on the pursuit of an army which they saw was so far superior to them in numbers, and leave their city unguarded; but (*si populus vult decipi, decipiat*—*if the people will be deceived, let them*) if the Canaanites will be so easily imposed upon, and in pursuit of God's Israel will break through all the laws of policy and good management, the Israelites are not at all to be blamed for taking advantage of their fury and thoughtlessness; nor is it any way inconsistent with the character God is pleased to give of them, that they are *children that will not lie*. Now in the account here given of this matter,

I. There is some difficulty in adjusting the numbers that were employed to effect it. Mention is made (v. 3) of 30,000 that were *chosen and sent away by night*, to whom the charge was given to surprise the city as soon as ever they perceived it was evacuated, v. 4, 7, 8. And yet afterwards (v. 12) it is said, *Joshua took 5000 men and set them to lie in ambush* behind the city, and that *ambush entered the city, and set it on fire*, v. 19. Now, 1. Some think there were two parties sent out to lie in ambush, 30,000 first, and afterwards 5000 to guard the roads, and to intercept those that were first sent out; and that Joshua made his open attack upon the city with all the thousands of Israel. So the learned bishop Patrick, insisting upon God's command (v. 1) to take *all the people of war with him*. But, 2. Others think that all the people were taken only to encamp before the city, and

that out of them Joshua chose out 30,000 men to be employed in the action, out of which he sent out 5000 to lie in ambush, which were as many as could be supposed to march *incognito*—*without being discovered* (more would have been seen, and thus the design would have been broken) and that then with the other 25,000 he made the open attack, as Masius thinks, or with the 30,000, which, as Calvin thinks, he kept entire for that purpose, having, besides them, sent out 5000 for an ambuscade. And those 5000 (they think) must be meant by those (v. 3) whom he *sent away by night*, with orders to lie in wait behind the city, though the particular number is not specified till v. 12. If we admit such a seeming disturbance in the order of the narrative (of which, perhaps, similar instances might be cited from the other scripture histories), it seems most probable that there was but one ambushment, which consisted only of 5000, enough for such a purpose.

II. Yet the principal parts of the story are plain enough, that a detachment being secretly marched behind the city, on the other side to that on which the main body of the army lay (the situation of the country, it is probable, favouring their concealment), Joshua, and the forces with him, faced the city; the garrison made a vigorous sally out upon them, whereupon they withdrew, gave ground, and retreated in some seeming disorder towards the wilderness, which being perceived by the men of Ai, they drew out all the force they had to pursue them. This gave a fair opportunity for those that lay in ambush to make themselves masters of the city, whereof when they had given notice by a smoke to Joshua, he, with all his force, returned upon the pursuers, who now, when it was too late, were aware of the snare they were drawn into, and, their retreat being intercepted, they were every man of them cut off. The like artifice we find used, Jdg. 20:30, etc. Now in this story we may observe,

1. What a brave commander Joshua was. See, (1.) His conduct and prudence. God gave him the hint (v. 2) that he should lay an ambush behind the city, but left him to himself to order the particulars, which he did admirably well. Doubtless *wisdom strengthens the wise more than ten mighty men*, Eccl. 7:19. (2.) His care and industry (v. 10): *He rose up early in the morning*, that he might lose no time, and to show how intent his mind was upon his business. Those that would maintain their spiritual conflicts must not love their ease. (3.) His courage and resolution; though an army of Israelites had been repulsed before Ai, yet he resolves to lead them on in person the second time, v. 5. Being himself also an elder, he took the elders of Israel with him to make this attack upon the city (v. 10), as if he were going rather to sit in judgment upon them as criminals than to fight them as enemies. (4.) His caution and consideration (v. 13): *He went that night into the midst of the valley*, to make the necessary dispositions for an attack, and to see that every thing was in good order. It is the pious conjecture of the learned bishop Patrick that he went into the valley alone, to pray to God for a blessing upon his enterprise, and he did not seek in vain. (5.) His constancy and perseverance; when he had stretched out his spear towards the city (v. 18, a spear almost as fatal and formidable to the enemies of Israel as the rod of Moses was) he never drew back his hand till the work was done. His hands in fighting, like Moses's in interceding, were steady till the going down of the sun. Those that have stretched out their hands against their spiritual enemies must never draw them back. *Lastly*, What Joshua did in the stratagem is applicable to our Lord Jesus, of whom he was a type. Joshua conquered by yielding, as if he had himself been conquered; so our Lord Jesus, when he bowed his head and gave up the ghost, seemed as if death and triumphed over him, and as if he and all his interests had been routed and ruined; but in his resurrection he rallied again and gave the powers of darkness a total defeat; he broke the serpent's

head, by suffering him to bruise his heel. A glorious stratagem!

2. What an obedient people Israel was. What *Joshua commanded them to do, according to the commandment of the Lord* (v. 8), they did it without murmuring or disputing. Those that were sent to lie in ambush between Beth-el and Ai (two cities confederate against them) were in a post of danger, and had they been discovered might all have been cut off, and yet they ventured; and, when the body of the army retreated and fled, it was both disgraceful and perilous, and yet, in obedience to Joshua, they did it.

3. What an infatuated enemy the king of Ai was, (1.) That he did not by his scouts discover those that lay in ambush behind the city, v. 14. Some observe it as a remarkable instance of the power of God in making men blind to their own interest, and the things that belong to their peace, that *he wist not that there were liers in wait against him*. Those are most in danger who are least aware that they are so. (2.) That when Israel seemed to fly he drew out all his forces to pursue them, and left none to guard his city and to secure his retreat, v. 17. Thus the church's enemies often run themselves into destruction by their own fury and the violence of their rage against the Israel of God. Pharaoh plunged himself into the Red Sea by the eagerness with which he pursued Israel. (3.) That from the killing of thirty-six men out of 3000, when Israel made the former attack upon his city, he should infer the total routing of so great an army as now he had to deal with (v. 6): *They flee before us as at the first*. See how the prosperity of fools destroys them and hardens them to their ruin. God had made use of the men of Ai as a scourge to chastise his people for meddling with the accursed thing, and this had puffed them up with a conceit that they must have the honour of delivering their country from these formidable invaders; but they were soon made to see their mistake, and that when the Israelites had reconciled themselves to their God they could have no power against them. God had made use of them only for the rebuking of Israel, with a purpose, when the correction was over, to throw the rod itself into the fire; *howbeit, they meant not so, but it was in their heart to destroy and cut off*, Isa. 10:5-7.

4. What a complete victory Israel obtained over them by the favour and blessing of God. Each did his part: the divided forces of Israel, by signals agreed on, understood one another, and every thing succeeded according to the project; so that the men of Ai, even when they were most confident of victory, found themselves surrounded, so that they had neither spirit to resist nor room to fly, but were under a fatal necessity of yielding their lives to the destroyers. And now it is hard to say whether the shouts of the men of Israel, or the shrieks of the men of Ai, were the louder, but easy to imagine what terror and confusion they were filled with, when their highest assurances sunk so suddenly into the heaviest despair. Note, The triumphing of the wicked is short, Job 20:5. They are *exalted for a little while*, that their fall and ruin may be the sorer, Job 24:24. See how easily, how quickly, the scale turns against those that have not God on their side.

Verses 23-29

We have here an account of the improvement which the Israelites made of their victory over Ai. 1. They put all to the sword, not only in the field, but in the city, man, woman, and child, none of them remained, v. 24. God, the righteous Judge, had passed this sentence upon them for their wickedness, so that the Israelites were only the ministers of his justice and the executioners of his doom. Once in this story, and but once, mention is made of the men of Beth-el, as confederates with the

men of Ai, v. 17. Though they had a king of their own, and were not subjects to the king of Ai (for the king of Beth-el is reckoned among the thirty-one kings that Joshua destroyed, ch. 12:16), yet Ai being a stronger place they threw themselves into that, for their own safety, and the strengthening of their neighbours' hands, and so (we may presume) were all cut off with them; thus that by which they hoped to prevent their own ruin hastened it. The whole number of the slain, it seems, was but 12,000, and inconsiderable body to make head against all the thousands of Israel; but those whom God will destroy he infatuates. Here it is said (v. 26) that *Joshua drew not his hand back wherewith he stretched out the spear* (v. 18) till the slaughter was completed. Some think the spear he stretched out was not to slay the enemies, but to animate and encourage his own soldiers, some flag or ensign being hung out at the end of this spear; and they observe it as an instance of his self-denial that though the fire of courage wherewith his breast was filled would have pushed him forward, sword in hand, into the hottest of the action, yet, in obedience to God, he kept the inferior post of a standard-bearer, and did not quit it till the work was done. By the spear stretched out, he directed the people to expect their help from God, and to him to give the praise. 2. They plundered the city and took all the spoil to themselves, v. 27. Thus the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just; the spoil they brought out of Egypt, by borrowing of their neighbours, was much of it expended upon the tabernacle they had reared in the wilderness, for which they are now reimbursed with interest. The spoil here taken, it is probable, was all brought together, and distributed by Joshua in due proportions, as that of the Midianites was, Num. 31:26, etc. It was not seized with irregularity or violence, for God is the God of order and equity, and not of confusion. 3. They laid the city in ashes, and left it to remain so, v. 28. Israel must yet dwell in tents, and therefore this city, as well as Jericho, must be burnt. And, though there was no curse entailed upon him that should rebuild it, yet, it seems, it was not rebuilt unless it be the same with Aijah, which we read of, long after, Neh. 11:31. Some think it was not rebuilt because Israel had received a defeat before it, the remembrance of which should be buried in the ruins of the city. 4. The king of Ai was taken prisoner and cut off, not by the sword of war as a soldier, but by the sword of justice as a malefactor. Joshua ordered him to be hanged, and his dead body thrown at the gate of his own city, *under a heap of stone*, v. 23, 29. Some particular reason, no doubt, there was for this severity against the king of Ai; it is likely he had been notoriously wicked and vile, and a blasphemer of the God of Israel, perhaps upon occasion of the repulse he had given to the forces of Israel in their first onset. Some observe that his dead body was thrown at the gate where he had been wont to sit in judgment that so much the greater contempt might thereby be poured upon the dignity he had been proud of, and he might be punished for the unrighteous decrees he had made in the very place where he had made them. Thus the Lord is known by the judgments which he executes.

Verses 30-35

This religious solemnity of which we have here an account comes in somewhat surprisingly in the midst of the history of the wars of Canaan. After the taking of Jericho and Ai, we should have expected that the next news would be of their taking possession of the country, the pushing on of their victories in other cities, and the carrying of the war into the bowels of the nation, now that they had made themselves masters of these frontier towns. But here a scene opens of quite another nature; the camp of Israel is drawn out into the field, not to engage the enemy, but to offer sacrifice, to hear the law read, and to say *Amen*

to the blessings and the curses. Some think this was not done till after some of the following victories were obtained which were read of, ch. 10 and 11. But it should seem by the maps that Shechem (near to which these two mountains Gerizim and Ebal were) was not so far off from Ai but that when they had taken that they might penetrate into the country as far as those two mountains, and therefore I would not willingly admit a transposition of the story; and the rather because, as it comes in here, it is a remarkable instance, 1. Of the zeal of Israel for the service of God and for his honour. Though never was war more honourable, more pleasant, or more gainful, nor ever was war more sure of victory, or more necessary to a settlement (for they had neither houses nor lands of their own till they had won them by the sword, no, not Joshua himself), yet all the business of the war shall stand still, while they make a long march to the place appointed, and there attend this solemnity. God appointed them to do this when they should have got over Jordan, and they did it as soon as possibly they could, though they might have had a colourable pretence to put it off. Note, We must not think to defer our covenanting with God till we are settled in the world, or must any business put us by from minding and pursuing the one thing needful. The way to prosper is to begin with God, Mt. 6:33. 2. It is an instance of the care of God concerning his faithful servants and worshippers. Though they were in an enemy's country, as yet unconquered, yet in the service of God they were safe, as Jacob when in this very country he was going to Beth-el to pay his vows: *the terror of God was upon the cities round about*, Gen. 35:5. Note, When we are in the way of duty God takes us under his special protection.

Twice Moses had given express orders for this solemnity; once Deu. 11:29, 30, where he seems to have pointed to the very place where it was to be performed; and again Deu. 27:2, etc. It was a federal transaction: the covenant was now renewed between God and Israel upon their taking possession of the land of promise, that they might be encouraged in the conquest of it, and might know upon what terms they held it, and come under fresh obligations to obedience. In token of the covenant, I. They built an altar, and offered sacrifice to God (v. 30, 31), in token of their dedication of themselves to God, as living sacrifices to his honour, in and by a Mediator, who is the altar that sanctifies this gift. This altar was erected on Mount *Ebal*, the mount on which the curse was put (Deu. 11:29), to signify that there, where by the law we had reason to expect a curse, by Christ's sacrifice of himself for us and his mediation we have peace with God; he has redeemed us from the curse of the law by being made a *curse for us*, Gal. 3:13. Even where it was said, by the curse, *You are not my people*, there it is said, through Christ the altar, *You are the children of the living God*, Hos. 1:10. The curses pronounced on Mount Ebal would immediately have been executed if atonement had not been made by sacrifice. By the sacrifices offered on this altar they did likewise give God the glory of the victories they had already obtained, as Ex. 17:15. Now that they had had the comfort of them, in the spoils of Ai, it was fit that God should have the praise of them. And they also implored his favour for their future success; for supplications as well as thanksgivings were intended in their peace-offerings. The way to prosper in all that we put our hand to is to take God along with us, and in all our ways to acknowledge him by prayer, praise, and dependence. The altar they built was of rough unhewn stone, according to the law (Ex. 20:25), for that which is most plain and natural, and least artful and affected, in the worship of God, he is best pleased with. Man's device can add no beauty to God's institutions.

II. They received the law from God; and this those must do that would find favour with him, and expect to have their offerings

accepted; for, if we turn away our ear from hearing the law, our prayers will be an abomination. When God took Israel into covenant he gave them his law, and they, in token of their consent to the covenant, subjected themselves to the law. Now here, 1. The law of the ten commandments was written upon stones in the presence of all Israel, as an abridgment of the whole, v. 32. This copy was not graven in the stone, as that which was reserved in the ark: That was to be done only by the finger of God; it is his prerogative to write the law in the heart. But the stones were plastered, and it was written upon the plaster, Deu. 27:4, 8. It was written, that all might see what it was that they consented to, and that it might be a standing remaining testimony to posterity of God's goodness in giving them such good laws, and a testimony against them if they were disobedient to them. It is a great mercy to any people to have the law of God in writing, and it is fit that the written law should be exposed to common view in a known tongue, that it may be seen and read of all men.

2. The blessings and the curses, the sanctions of the law, were publicly read, and the people (we may suppose), according to Moses's appointment, said *Amen* to them, v. 33, 34.

(1.) The auditory was very large. [1.] The greatest prince was not excused. The elders, officers, and judges, are not above the cognizance of the law, but will come under the blessing or the curse, according as they are or are not obedient to it, and therefore they must be present to consent to the covenant and to go before the people therein. [2.] The poorest stranger was not excluded. Here was a general naturalization of them: as well the stranger as he that was born among them was taken into covenant. This was an encouragement to proselytes, and a happy presage of the kindnesses intended for the poor Gentiles in the latter days.

(2.) The tribes were posted, as Moses directed, six towards Gerizim and six towards Ebal. And the ark in the midst of the valley was between them, for it was the *ark of the covenant*; and in it were shut up the close rolls of that law which was copied out and shown openly upon the stones. The covenant was commanded, and the command covenanted. the priests that attended the ark, or some of the Levites that attended them, after the people had all taken their places, and silence was proclaimed, pronounced distinctly the blessings and the curses, as Moses had drawn them up, to which the tribes said *Amen*; and yet it is here only said that they should *bless the people*, for the blessing was that which was first and chiefly intended, and which God designed in giving the law. If they fell under the curse, that was their own fault. And it was really a blessing to the people that they had this matter laid so plainly before them, *life and death, good and evil*; he *had not dealt so with other nations*.

3. The law itself also containing the precepts and prohibitions was read (v. 35), it should seem by Joshua himself, who did not think it below him to be a reader in the congregation of the Lord. In conformity to this example, the solemn reading of the law, which was appointed once in seven years (Deu. 31:10, 11), was performed by their king or chief magistrate. It is here intimated what a general publication of the law this was. (1.) Every word was read; even the minutest precepts were not omitted, nor the most copious abridged; not one iota or tittle of the law shall pass away, and therefore none was, in reading, skipped over, under pretence of want of time, or that any part was needless or not proper to be read. It was not many weeks since Moses had preached the whole book of *Deuteronomy* to them, yet Joshua must now read it all over again; it is good to hear twice what God has spoken once (Ps. 62:11) and to review what had been delivered to us, or to have it repeated, that we may not let it slip.

(2.) Every Israelite was present, even *the women and the little ones* that all might know and do their duty. Note, Masters of families should bring their wives and children with them to the solemn assemblies for religious worship. All that are capable of learning must come to be *taught out of the law*. The strangers also attended with them; for wherever we are, though but as strangers, we should improve every opportunity of acquainting ourselves with God and his holy will.

Chapter 9

Here is in this chapter, I. The impolite confederacy of the kings of Canaan against Israel (v. 1, 2). II. The polite confederacy of the inhabitants of Gibeon with Israel, 1. How it was subtly proposed and petitioned for by the Gibeonites pretending to come from a far country (v. 3–13). 2. How it was unwarily consented to by Joshua and the Israelites, to the disgust of the congregation when the fraud was discovered (v. 14–18). 3. How the matter was adjusted to the satisfaction of all sides, by giving these Gibeonites their lives because they had covenanted with them, yet depriving them of their liberties because the covenant was not fairly obtained (v. 19–27).

Verses 1-2

Hitherto the Canaanites had acted defensively; the Israelites were the aggressors upon Jericho and Ai. But here the kings of Canaan are in consultation to attack Israel, and concert matters for a vigorous effort of their united forces to check the progress of their victorious arms. Now, 1. It was strange they did not do this sooner. They had notice long since of their approach; Israel's design upon Canaan was no secret; one would have expected that a prudent concern for their common safety would put them upon taking some measures to oppose their coming over Jordan, and maintain that pass against them, or to give them a warm reception as soon as they were over. It was strange they did not attempt to raise the siege of Jericho, or at least fall in with the men of Ai, when they had given them a defeat. But they were, either through presumption or despair, wonderfully infatuated and at their wits' end. Many know not the things that belong to their peace till they are hidden from their eyes. 2. It was more strange that they did it now. Now that the conquest of Jericho had given such a pregnant proof of God's power, and that of Ai of Israel's policy, one would have thought the end of their consultation should be, not to fight with Israel, but to make peace with them, and to gain the best terms they could for themselves. This would have been their wisdom (Lu. 14:32), but their minds were blinded, and their hearts hardened to their destruction. Observe, (1.) What induced them now at last to enter upon this consultation. When they *heard thereof* (v. 1), not only of the conquest of Jericho and Ai, but of the convention of the states of Mount Ebal, of which we have an account immediately before,—when they heard that Joshua, as if he thought himself already completely master of the country, had had all his people together, and had read the laws to them by which they must be governed, and taken their promises to submit to those laws,—then they perceived the Israelites were in good earnest, and thought it was high time for them to bestir themselves. The pious devotion of God's people sometimes provokes and exasperates their enemies more than any thing else. (2.) How unanimous they were in their resolves. Though they were many kings of different nations, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, etc., doubtless of different interests, and that had often been at variance one with another, yet they determined, *nemine contradicente—unanimously*, to unite against Israel. O that Israel would learn this of Canaanites, to sacrifice private interests to the public welfare, and to lay aside all animosities among themselves, that they may cordially unite against the common enemies of God's kingdom among men!

Verses 3-14

Here, I. The Gibeonites desire to make peace with Israel, being alarmed by the tidings they heard of the destruction of Jericho,

v. 3. Other people heard those tidings, and were irritated thereby to make war upon Israel; but the Gibeonites heard them and were induced to make peace with them. Thus the discovery of the glory and grace of God in the gospel is to some a *savour of life unto life, but to others a savour of death unto death*, 2 Co. 2:16. The same sun softens wax and hardens clay. I do not remember that we read any where of a king of Gibeon. Had their government been at this time in a single person, perhaps his heart would have been too high to yield to Israel, and he would have joined with the rest of the kings against Israel. But these four united cities (mentioned v. 17) seem to have been governed by elders, or senators (v. 11), who consulted the common safety more than their own personal dignity. The inhabitants of Gibeon did well for themselves. We have,

II. The method they took to compass it. They knew that all the inhabitants of the land of Canaan were to be cut off; perhaps they had some spies in the congregation at Ebal, when the law was read, who observed and brought them notice of the command given to Israel (Deu. 7:1-3), that they should *show no mercy* to the Canaanites, give them no quarter in battle, which made them afraid of fighting them, and that they should *make no covenant with them*, which made them despair of gaining any advantage by treating with them; and therefore there was no way of saving their lives from the sword of Israel unless they could, by disguising themselves, make Joshua believe that they came from some very country, which the Israelites were not commanded to make war upon nor forbidden to *make peace with*, but were particularly appointed to *offer peace to*, Deu. 20:10, 15. Unless they could be admitted under this notion, they saw there was but one way with them: they must submit to the fate of Jericho and Ai. Though the neighbouring princes *knew that all the men thereof were mighty* (ch 10:2), and they knew it themselves, yet they durst not contend with Israel, who had an Almighty God on their side. This therefore is the only game they have to play, and observe,

1. They play it very artfully and successfully. Never was any such thing more craftily managed.

(1.) They come under the character of ambassadors from a foreign state, which they thought would please the princes of Israel, and make them proud of the honour of being courted by distant countries: we find Hezekiah fond of those that came to him from a far country (Isa. 39:3); they were not used to be thus courted.

(2.) They pretended to have undergone the fatigues of a very long journey, and produced what passed for an ocular demonstration of it. It should seem it was then usual for those that undertook long journeys to take with them, as we do now for long voyages, all manner of provision in kind, the country not being furnished as ours is now with houses of entertainment, for the convenience of which, when we have occasion to make use of them, we have reason to be very thankful. Now they here pretended that their provision, when they brought it from home, was fresh and new, but now it appeared to be old and dry, whereas it might well be presumed they had not loitered, but made the best of their way; so that hence it must be inferred that they came, as they said they did, from a very far country: their sacks or portmanteaus were old; the wine was all drunk, and the bottles in which it had been were broken; their shoes and clothes were worse than those of the Israelites in forty years, and their bread was mouldy, v. 4, 5, and again, v. 12, 13. Thus God's Israel have often been deceived and imposed upon with a show of antiquity. But (as bishop Hall expresses it) *errors are never the older for being patched*, and so seeming old; but those that will be caught with this Gibeonitish stratagem prove they have not consulted with God. And thus there are those who

make themselves poor with the badges of want and distress and yet have great riches (Prov. 13:7), or at least have no need of relief, by which fraud charity is misplaced and diverted from those that are real objects of it.

(3.) When they were suspected, and more strictly examined as to whence they came, they industriously declined telling the name of their country, till the agreement was settled. [1.] The men of Israel suspected a fraud (v. 7): "*Peradventure you dwell among us*, and then we may not, we must not, make any league with you." This might have discouraged the Gibeonites from urging the matter any further, concluding that if the peace were made the Israelites would not think themselves obliged to keep it, having thus solemnly protested against it in case they *dwelt among them*; but, knowing that there was no hope at all if they stood it out, they bravely ventured a submission. "Who knows but the people of Israel may save us alive, though thus inveigled into a promise; and if we tell them at last we shall but die." [2.] Joshua put the questions to them, *Who are you? and whence come you?* He finds himself concerned to stand upon his guard against secret fraud as well as against open force. We in our spiritual warfare must *stand against the wiles of the devil*, remembering he is a subtle serpent as well as a roaring lion. In all leagues of relation and friendship we must first try and then trust, lest we repent at leisure agreements made in haste. [3.] They would not tell whence they came; but still repeat the same thing: *We have come from a very far country*, v. 9. They will have it thought that it is a country Joshua knows nothing of nor ever heard of, and therefore would be never the wiser if they should tell him the name of it.

(4.) They profess a respect for the God of Israel, the more to ingratiate themselves with Joshua, and we charitably believe they were sincere in this profession: "*We have come because of the name of the Lord thy God* (v. 9), because of what we have heard of that name, which has convinced us that it is *above every name*, and because we have a desire towards that name and the remembrance of it, and would gladly come under its protection."

(5.) They fetch their inducements from what had been done some time before in Moses's reign, the tidings whereof might easily be supposed ere this to have reached distant regions, the plagues of Egypt and the destruction of Sihon and Og (v. 9, 10), but prudently say nothing of the destruction of Jericho and Ai (though this was the true inducement, v. 3), because they will have it supposed that they came from home long before those conquests were made. We need not be long to seek for reasons why we should submit to the God of Israel; we may be furnished either with new or old, which we will.

(6.) They make a general submission—*We are our servants*; and humbly sue for a general agreement—*Make a league with us*, v. 11. They insist not upon terms, but will be glad of peace upon any terms; nor will the case admit of delays, lest the fraud be discovered; they would fain have the bargain struck up immediately; if Joshua will but *make a league* with them, they have all they come for, and they hope their ragged clothes and clouted shoes will be no exception against them. God and Israel reject none for their poverty. But,

2. There is a mixture of good and evil in their conduct. (1.) Their falsehood cannot be justified, nor ought it to be drawn into a precedent. We must not do evil that good may come. Had they owned their country but renounced the idolatries of it, resigning the possession of it to Israel and themselves to the God of Israel, we have reason to think Joshua would have been directed by the oracle of God to spare their lives, and they needed not to have made these pretensions. It is observable that when they had

once said, *We have come from a far country* (v. 6), they found themselves necessitated to say it again (v. 9), and to say what was utterly false concerning their bread, their bottles, and their clothes (v. 12, 13), for one lie is an inlet to another, and that to a third, and so on. The way of that sin is down-hill. But, (2.) Their faith and prudence are to be greatly commended. Our Lord commended even the unjust steward, because he had done wisely and well for himself, Lu. 16:8. In submitting to Israel, they submitted to the God of Israel, which implied a renunciation of the god they had served, a resignation to the laws of true religion. They had heard enough to convince them of the infinite power of the God of Israel, and thence might infer his other perfections of wisdom and goodness; and how can we do better for ourselves than surrender at discretion to infinite wisdom, and cast ourselves upon the mercy of a God of infinite goodness. The submission of these Gibeonites was the more laudable because it was, [1.] Singular. Their neighbours took another course, and expected they should join with them. [2.] Speedy. They did not stay till Israel had besieged their cities; then it would have been too late to capitulate; but when they were at some distance they desired conditions of peace. Thy way to avoid a judgment is to meet it by repentance. Let us imitate these Gibeonites, and make our peace with God in the rags of humiliation, godly sorrow, and mortification, so our iniquity shall not be our ruin. Let us be servants to Jesus, our blessed Joshua, and make a league with him and the Israel of God, and we shall live.

Verses 15-21

Here is, I. The treaty soon concluded with the Gibeonites, v. 15. The thing was not done with much formality, but in short, 1. They agreed to let them live, and more the Gibeonites did not ask. In a common war this would have been but a small matter to be granted; but in the wars of Canaan, which were to make a general destruction, it was a great favour to a Canaanite to have his *life given him for a prey*, Jer. 45:5. 2. This agreement was made not by Joshua only, but by the princes of the congregation in conjunction with him. Though Joshua had an extraordinary call to the government, and extraordinary qualifications for it, yet he would not act in an affair of this nature without the counsel and concurrence of the princes, who were neither kept in the dark nor kept under foot, but were treated by him as sharers in the government. 3. It was ratified by an oath; they swore unto them, not by any of the gods of Canaan, but by the God of Israel only, v. 19. Those that mean honestly do not startle at assurances, but satisfy those with whom they treat, and glorify God by calling him to witness to the sincerity of their intentions. 4. Nothing appears to have been culpable in all this but that it was done rashly; they took of their victuals, by which they satisfied themselves that it was indeed old and dry, but did not consider that his was no proof of their bringing it fresh from home; so that, making use of their senses only, but not their reason, *they received the men* (as the margin reads it) *because of their victuals*, perceiving perhaps, upon the view and taste of their bread, not only that now it was old, but that it had been fine and very good at first, whence they inferred that they were persons of some quality, and therefore the friendship of their country was not to be despised. But *they asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord*. They had the Urim and Thummim with them, which they might have advised with in this difficult case, and which would have told them no lie, would have led them into no error; but they relied so much on their own politics that they thought it needless to bring the matter to the oracle. Joshua himself was not altogether without blame herein. Note, We make more haste than good speed in any business when we

stay not to take God along with us, and by the word and prayer to consult him. Many a time we see cause to reflect upon it with regret that such and such an affair miscarried, because we *asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord*; would we acknowledge him in all our ways, we should find them more safe, easy, and successful.

II. The fraud soon discovered, by which this league was procured. *A lying tongue is but for a moment*, and truth will be the daughter of time. Within three days they found, to their great surprise, that the cities which these ambassadors had treated for were very near them, but one night's foot-march from the camp at Gilgal, ch. 10:9. Either their own scouts or the parties that sallied out to acquaint themselves with the country, or perhaps some deserters that came over to them from the enemy, informed them of the truth in this matter. Those that suffer themselves to be deceived by the wiles of Satan will soon be undeceived to their confusion, and will find that near, even at the door, which they imagined was very far off.

III. The disgust of the congregation at this. They did indeed submit to the restraints which this league laid upon them, and smote not the cities of the Gibeonites, neither slew the persons nor seized the prey; but it vexed them to have their hands thus tied, and they *murmured against the princes* (v. 18) it is to be feared, more from a jealousy for their own profit than from a zeal for the fulfilling of God's command, though some of them perhaps had a regard to that. Many are forward to arraign and censure the actions of princes while they are ignorant of the springs of those actions and are incompetent judges of the reasons of state that govern them. While therefore we are satisfied in general that those who are over us aim at nothing but the public good, and sincerely seek the welfare of their people, we ought to make the best of what they do and not exercise ourselves in things above us.

IV. The prudent endeavour of the princes to pacify the discontented congregation, and to accommodate the matter; herein all the princes concurred and were unanimous, which doubtless disposed the people to acquiesce.

1. They resolved to spare the lives of the Gibeonites, for so they had expressly sworn to do (v. 15), to let them live. (1.) The oath was lawful, else it had not bound them any more than Herod's oath bound him to cut off John Baptist's head; it is true God had appointed them to destroy all the Canaanites, but the law must be construed, *in favorem vitae—with some tender allowance*, to mean those only that stood it out and would not surrender their country to them, and not to bind them so far to put off the sense of honour and humanity as to slay those who had never lifted up a hand against them nor ever would, but before they were reduced to any extremity, or ever attempted any act of hostility, with one consent humbled themselves; the *kings of Israel were certainly more merciful kings than to do so* (1 Ki. 20:31), and the God of Israel a more merciful God than to order it so. *Satis est prostrasse leoni—It is enough to have laid the lion prostrate*. And besides, the reason of the law is the law; the mischief designed to be prevented by that law was the infecting of the Israelites with their idolatry, Deu. 7:4. But if the Gibeonites renounce their idolatry, and become friends and servants to the house of God, the danger is effectually prevented, the reason of the law ceases, and consequently the obligation of it, especially to a thing of this nature. The conversion of sinners shall prevent their ruin. (2.) The oath being lawful, both the princes and the people for whom they transacted were bound by it, bound in conscience, bound in honour to the God of Israel, by whom they had sworn, and whose name would have been blasphemed by the Canaanites if they had violated this oath. They speak as those that *feared an oath* (Eccl. 9:2),

when they argued thus: *We will let them live, lest wrath be upon us, because of the oath which we swore*, v. 20. He that ratifies a promise with an oath imprecates the divine vengeance if he wilfully break his promise, and has reason to expect that divine justice will take him at his word. God is not mocked, and therefore oaths are not to be jested with. The princes would keep their word, [1.] Though they lost by it. A citizen of Zion *swears to his own hurt and changes not*, Ps. 15:4. Joshua and the princes, when they found it was to their prejudice that they had thus bound themselves, did not apply to Eleazar for a dispensation, much less did they pretend that no faith is to be kept with heretics, with Canaanites; no, they were strangers to the modern artifices of the Romish church to elude the most sacred bonds, and even to sanctify perjuries [2.] Though the people were uneasy at it, and their discontent might have ended in a mutiny, yet the princes would not violate their engagement to the Gibeonites; we must never be over-awed, either by majesty or multitude, to do a sinful thing, and go against our consciences. [3.] Though they were drawn into this league by a wile, and might have had a very plausible pretence to declare it null and void, yet they adhered to it. They might have pleaded that though those were the men with whom they exchanged the ratifications, yet these were not the cities intended in the league; they had promised to spare certain cities, without names, that were very far off, and upon the express consideration of their being so; but these were very near, and therefore not the cities that they covenanted with. And many learned men have thought that they were so grossly imposed upon by the Gibeonites that it would have been lawful for them to have recalled their promise, but to preserve their reputation, and to keep up in Israel a veneration of an oath, they would stand to it; but it is plain that they thought themselves indispensably obliged by it, and were apprehensive that the wrath of God would fall upon them if they broke it. And, however their adherence to it might be displeasing to the congregation, it is plain that it was acceptable to God; for when, in pursuance of this league, they undertook the protection of the Gibeonites, God gave them the most glorious victory that ever they had in all their wars (ch. 10), and long afterwards severely avenged the wrong Saul did to the Gibeonites in violation of this league, 2 Sa. 21:1. Let this convince us all how religiously we ought to perform our promises, and make good our bargains; and what conscience we ought to make of our words when they are once given. If a covenant obtained by so many lies and deceits might not be broken, shall we think to evade the obligation of those that have been made with all possible honesty and fairness? If the fraud of others will not justify or excuse our falsehood, certainly the honesty of others in dealing with us will aggravate and condemn our dishonesty in dealing with them.

2. Though they spared their lives, yet they seized their liberties, and sentenced them to be *hewers of wood and drawers of water to the congregation*, v. 21. By this proposal the discontented congregation was pacified; for, (1.) Those who were angry that the Gibeonites lived might be content when they saw them condemned to that which, in the general apprehension, is worse than death, perpetual servitude. (2.) Those who were angry that they were not spoiled might be content when their serving the congregation would be more to the public advantage than their best effects could be; and, in short, the Israelites would be not losers either in honour or profit by this peace with the Gibeonites; convince them of this, and they will be satisfied.

Verses 22-27

The matter is here settled between Joshua and the Gibeonites, and an explanation of the league agreed upon. We may suppose

that now, not the messengers who were first sent, but the elders of Gibeon, and of the cities that were dependent upon it, were themselves present and treated with, that the matter might be fully compromised.

I. Joshua reproves them for their fraud, v. 22. And they excuse it as well as they can, v. 24. 1. Joshua gives the reproof very mildly: *Wherefore have you beguiled us?* He does not load them with any ill names, does not give them any harsh provoking language, does not call them, as they deserved to be called, *base liars*, but only asks them, *Why have you beguiled us?* Under the greatest provocations, it is our wisdom and duty to keep our temper, and to bridle our passion; a just cause needs not anger to defend it, and a bad one is made never the better by it. 2. They make the best excuse for themselves, that the thing would bear, v. 24. They found by the word of God that sentence of death was passed upon them (the command was to *destroy all the inhabitants of the land*, without exception), and they found by the works of God already wrought that there was no opposing the execution of this sentence; they considered that God's sovereignty is incontestable, his justice inflexible, his power irresistible, and therefore resolved to try what his mercy was, and found it was not in vain to cast themselves upon it. They do not go about to justify their lie, but in effect beg pardon for it, pleading it was purely to save their lives that they did it, which every man that finds in himself the force of the law of self-preservation will therefore make great allowances for, especially in such a case as this, where the fear was not merely of the power of man (if that were all, one might flee from that to the divine protection), but of the power of God himself, which they saw engaged against them.

II. Joshua condemns them to servitude, as a punishment of their fraud (v. 23), and they submit to the sentence (v. 25), and for aught that appears both sides are pleased.

1. Joshua pronounces them perpetual bondmen. They had purchased their lives with a lie, but, that being no good consideration, he obliges them to hold their lives under the rent and reservation of their continual labours, in hewing wood and drawing water, the meanest and most toilsome employments. Thus their lie was punished; had they dealt fairly and plainly with Israel, perhaps they would have had more honourable conditions granted them, but now, since they gain their lives with ragged clothes and clouted shoes, the badges of servitude, they are condemned for ever to wear such, so must their doom be. And thus the ransom of their lives is paid; dominion is acquired by the preservation of a life that lies at mercy (*servus dicitur a servando—a servant is so called from the act of saving*); they owe their service to those to whom they owe their lives. Observe how the judgment is given against them. (1.) Their servitude is made a curse to them. "Now you are cursed with the ancient curse of Canaan," from whom these Hivites descended, *a servant of servants shalt thou be*, Gen. 9:25. What shall be done to the false tongue but this? Cursed shall it be. (2.) Yet this curse is turned into a blessing; they must be servants, but it shall be for *the house of my God*. The princes would have them slaves *unto all the congregation* (v. 21), at least they chose to express themselves so, for the pacifying of the people that were discontented; but Joshua mitigates the sentence, both in honour to God and in favour to the Gibeonites: it would be too hard upon them to make them every man's drudge; if they must be *hewers of wood and drawers of water*, than which there cannot be a greater disparagement, especially to those who are citizens of a royal city, and *all mighty men* (ch. 10:2), yet they shall be so to *the house of my God*, than which there cannot be a greater preferment: David himself could have wished to be a door-keeper there. Even servile work becomes honourable when it is

done for the house of our God and the offices thereof. [1.] They were hereby excluded from the liberties and privileges of true-born Israelites, and a remaining mark of distinction was put upon their posterity throughout all their generations. [2.] They were hereby employed in such services as required their personal attendance upon *the altar of God in the place which he should choose* (v. 27), which would bring them to the knowledge of the law of God, keep them strictly to that holy religion to which they were proselyted, and prevent their revolt to the idolatries of their fathers. [3.] This would be a great advantage to the priests and Levites to have so many, and those mighty men, constant attendants upon them, and engaged by office to do all the drudgery of the tabernacle. A great deal of wood must be hewed for fuel for God's house, not only to keep the fire burning continually upon the altar, but to boil the flesh of the peace-offerings, etc. And a great deal of water must be drawn for the divers washings which the law prescribed. These and other such servile works, such as washing the vessels, carrying out ashes, sweeping the courts, etc., which otherwise the Levites must have done themselves, these Gibeonites were appointed to do. [4.] They were herein servants to the congregation too; for whatever promotes and helps forward the worship of God is real service to the commonwealth. It is the interest of every Israelite that the altar of God be well attended. Hereby also the congregation was excused from much of that servile work which perhaps would otherwise have been expected from some of them. God had made a law that the Israelites should never make any of their brethren bondmen; if they had slaves, they must be of the heathen that were round about them, Lev. 25:44. Now in honour of this law, and of Israel that was honoured by it, God would not have the drudgery, no, not of the tabernacle itself, to be done by Israelites, but by Gibeonites, who were afterwards called *Nethinim*, men given to the Levites, as the Levites were to the priests (Num. 3:9), to minister to them in the service of God. [5.] This may be looked upon as typifying the admission of the Gentiles into the gospel church. Now they were taken in upon their submission to be under-officers, but afterwards God promises that he will *take of them for priests and Levites*, Isa. 66:21.

2. They submit to this condition, v. 25. Conscious of a fault in framing a lie whereby to deceive the Israelites, and sensible also how narrowly they escaped with their lives and what a kindness it was to have them spared, they acquiesce in the proposal: *Do as it seemeth right unto thee*. Better live in servitude, especially such servitude, than not live at all. Those of the very meanest and most despicable condition are described to be *hewers of wood and drawers of water*, Deu. 29:11. But skin for skin, liberty, and labour, and *all that a man has, will he give for his life*, and no ill bargain. Accordingly the matter was determined. (1.) Joshua delivered them out of the hands of the Israelites that they should not be slain, v. 26. It seems there were those who would have fallen upon them with the sword if Joshua had not interposed with his authority; but wise generals know when to sheathe the sword, as well as when to draw it. (2.) He then delivered them again into the hands of the Israelites to be enslaved, v. 27. They were not to keep possession of their cities, for we find afterwards that three of them fell to the lot of Benjamin and one to that of Judah; nor were they themselves to be at their own disposal, but, as bishop Patrick thinks, were dispersed into the cities of the priests and Levites, and came up with them in their courses to serve at the altar, out of the profits of which, it is probable, they were maintained. And thus Israel's bondmen became the Lord's freemen, for his service in the meanest office is liberty, and his work is its own wages. And this they got by their early submission. Let us, in like manner, submit to our Lord Jesus, and refer our lives to him, saying, *"We are in thy hand, do unto us as seemeth good and right unto thee; only save our*

souls, and we shall not repent it:" if he appoint us to bear his cross, and draw in his yoke, and serve at his altar, this shall be afterwards neither shame nor grief to us, while the meanest office in God's service will entitle us to a *dwelling in the house of the Lord all the days of our life.*

Chapter 10

We have in this chapter an account of the conquest of the kings and kingdoms of the southern part of the land of Canaan, as, in the next chapter, of the reduction of the northern parts, which together completed the glorious successes of the wars of Canaan. In this chapter we have an account, I. Of the routing of their forces in the field, in which observe, 1. Their confederacy against the Gibeonites (v. 1-5). 2. The Gibeonites' request to Joshua to assist them (v. 6). 3. Joshua's speedy march under divine encouragement for their relief (v. 7-9). 4. The defeat of the armies of these confederate kings (v. 10, 11). 5. The miraculous prolonging of the day by the standing still of the sun in favour of the conquerors (v. 12-14). II. Of the execution of the kings that escaped out of the battle (v. 15-27). III. Of the taking of the particular cities, and the total destruction of all that were found in them. Makkedah (v. 28). Libnah (v. 29, 30). Lachish (v. 31, 32) and the king of Gezer that attempted its rescue (v. 33). Eglon (v. 34, 35). Hebron (v. 36, 37). Debir (v. 38, 39). And the bringing of all that country into the hands of Israel (v. 40-42). And, lastly, the return of the army to the head-quarters (v. 43).

Verses 1-6

Joshua and the hosts of Israel had now been a good while in the land of Canaan, and no great matters were effected; they were made masters of Jericho by a miracle, of Ai by stratagem, and of Gibeon by surrender, and that was all; hitherto the progress of their victories had not seemed proportionable to the magnificence of their entry and the glory of their beginnings. Those among them that were impatient of delays, it is probable, complained of Joshua's slowness, and asked why they did not immediately penetrate into the heart of the country, before the enemy could rally their forces to make head against them, why they stood trifling, while they were so confident both of their title and of their success. Thus Joshua's prudence, perhaps, was censured as slothfulness, cowardice, and want of spirit. But, 1. Canaan was not to be conquered in a day. God had said that *by little and little* he would drive out the Canaanites, Ex. 23:30. He that believeth will not make haste, or conclude that the promise will never be performed because it is not performed so soon as he expected. 2. Joshua waited for the Canaanites to be the aggressors; let them first make an onset upon Israel, or the allies of Israel, and then their destruction will be, or at least will appear to be, the more just and more justifiable. Joshua had warrant sufficient to set upon them, yet he stays till they strike the first stroke, that he might provide for honest things in the sight, not only of God, but of men; and they would be the more inexcusable in their resistance, now that they had seen what favour the Gibeonites found with Israel. 3. It was for the advantage of Israel to sit still awhile, that the forces of these little kings might unite in one body, and so might the more easily be cut off at one blow. This God had in his eye when he put it into their hearts to combine against Israel; though they designed thereby to strengthen one another, that which he intended was to gather them as sheaves into the floor, to fall together under the flail, Mic. 4:12. Thus oftentimes that seeming paradox proves wholesome counsel, *Stay awhile, and we shall have done the sooner*. After Israel had waited awhile for an occasion to make war upon the Canaanites, a fair one offers itself. 1. Five kings combine against the Gibeonites. Adoni-zedec king of Jerusalem was the first mover and ring-leader of this confederacy. He had a good name (it signifies *lord of righteousness*), being a descendant perhaps from Melchizedek, *king of righteousness*; but,

notwithstanding the goodness of his name and family, it seems he was a bad man, and an implacable enemy to the posterity of that Abraham to whom his predecessor, Melchizedek, was such a faithful friend. He called upon his neighbours to join against Israel either because he was the most honourable prince, and had the precedency among these kings (perhaps they had some dependence upon him, at least they paid a deference to him, as the most public, powerful, and active man they had among them), or because he was first or most apprehensive of the danger his country was in, not only by the conquest of Jericho and Ai, but the surrender of Gibeon, which, it seems, was the chief thing that alarmed him, it being one of the most considerable frontier towns they had. Against Gibeon therefore all the force he would raise must be leveled. *Come, says he, and help me, that we may smite Gibeon.* This he resolves to do, either, (1.) In policy, that he might retake the city, because it was a strong city, and of great consequence to this country in whose hands it was; or, (2.) In passion, that he might chastise the citizens for making peace with Joshua, pretending that they had perfidiously betrayed their country and strengthened the common enemy, whereas they had really done the greatest kindness imaginable to their country, by setting them a good example, if they would have followed it. Thus Satan and his instruments make war upon those that make peace with God. *Marvel not if the world hate you,* and treat those as deserters who are converts to Christ. 2. The Gibeonites send notice to Joshua of the distress and danger they are in, v. 6. Now they expect benefit from the league they had made with Israel, because, though it was obtained by deceit, it was afterwards confirmed when the truth came out. They think Joshua obliged to help them, (1.) In conscience, because they were his servants; not in compliment, as they had said in their first address (ch. 9:8), *We are thy servants,* but in reality made servants to the congregation; and it is the duty of masters to take care of the poorest and meanest of their servants, and not to see them wronged when it is in the power of their hand to right them. Those that pay allegiance may reasonably expect protection. Thus David pleads with God (Ps. 119:94), *I am thine, save me;* and so may we, if indeed we be his. (2.) In honour, because the ground of their enemies' quarrel with them was the respect they had shown to Israel, and the confidence they had in a covenant with them. Joshua cannot refuse to help them when it is for their affection to him, and to the name of his God, that they are attacked. David thinks it a good plea with God (Ps. 69:7), *For thy sake I have borne reproach.* When our spiritual enemies set themselves in array against us, and threaten to swallow us up, let us, by faith and prayer, apply to Christ, our Joshua, for strength and succour, as Paul did, and we shall receive the same answer of peace, *My grace is sufficient for thee,* 2 Co. 12:8, 9.

Verses 7-14

Here, I. Joshua resolves to assist the Gibeonites, and God encourages him in this resolve. 1. He ascended from Gilgal (v. 7), that is, he designed, determined, and prepared for, this expedition to relieve Gibeon, for it is probable it was before he stirred a step that God spoke to him to encourage him. It was generous and just in Joshua to help his new allies, though perhaps the king of Jerusalem, when he attacked them, little thought that Joshua would be so ready to help them, but expected he would abandon them as Canaanites, the rather because they had obtained their league with him by fraud; therefore he speaks with assurance (v. 4) of smiting Gibeon. But Joshua knew that his promise to let them live obliged him, not only not to slay them himself, but not to stand by and see them slain when it was in the power of his hand to prevent it, Prov. 24:11, 12. He knew

that when they embraced the faith and worship of the God of Israel they came to trust under the shadow of his wings (Ruth 2:12), and therefore, as his servants, he was bound to protect them. 2. God animated him for his undertaking, (v. 8): *Fear not*, that is, (1.) "Doubt not of the goodness of thy cause and the clearness of thy call; though it be to assist Gibeonites, thou art in the way of duty, and God is with thee of a truth." (2.) "Dread not the power of the enemy; though so many kings are confederate against thee, and are resolved to make their utmost efforts for the reduction of Gibeon, and it may be will fight desperately in a desperate cause, yet let not this discourage thee, *I have delivered them into thy hand;*" and those can make neither resistance nor escape whom God has marked for destruction.

II. Joshua applies himself to execute this resolve, and God assists him in the execution. Here we have,

1. The great industry of Joshua, and the power of God working with it for the defeat of the enemy. In this action, (1.) Joshua showed his good-will in the haste he made for the relief of Gibeon (v. 9): *He came unto them suddenly*, for the extremity was such as would not admit delay. If one of the tribes of Israel had been in danger, he could not have shown more care or zeal for its relief than here for Gibeon, remembering in this, as in other cases, there must be one law for the stranger that was proselyted and for him that was born in the land. Scarcely had the confederate princes got their forces together, and sat down before Gibeon, when Joshua was upon them, the surprise of which would put them into the greatest confusion. Now that the enemy were actually drawn up into a body, which had all as it were but one neck, despatch was as serviceable to his cause as before delay was, while he waited for this general rendezvous; and now that things were ripe for execution no man more expeditious than Joshua, who before had seemed slow. Now it shall never be said, *He left that to be done to-morrow which he could do to-day*. When Joshua found he could not reach Gibeon in a day, lest he should lose any real advantages against the enemy, or so much as seem to come short or to neglect his new allies, he marched all night, resolving not to give sleep to his eyes, nor slumber to his eye-lids, till he had accomplished this enterprise. It was well the forces he took with him were mighty men of valour, not only able-bodied men, but men of spirit and resolution, and hearty in the cause, else they neither could nor would have borne this fatigue, but would have murmured at their leader and would have asked, "Is this the rest we were promised in Canaan?" But they well considered that the present toil was in order to a happy settlement, and therefore were reconciled to it. Let the *good soldiers of Jesus Christ* learn hence to *endure hardness, in following the Lamb whithersoever he goes*, and not think themselves undone if their religion lose them now and then a night's sleep; it will be enough to rest when we come to heaven. But why needed Joshua to put himself and his men so much to the stretch? Had not God promised him that without fail he would *deliver the enemies into his hand*? It is true he had; but God's promises are intended, not to slacken and supersede, but to quicken and encourage our endeavours. He that believeth doth not make haste to anticipate providence, but doth make haste to attend it, with a diligent, not a distrustful, speed. (2.) God showed his great power in defeating the enemies whom Joshua so vigorously attacked, v. 10, 11. Joshua had a very numerous and powerful army with him, hands enough to despatch a dispirited enemy, so that the enemy might have been scattered by the ordinary fate of war; but God himself would appear in this great and decisive battle, and draw up the artillery of heaven against the Canaanites, to demonstrate to this people that they *got not this land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them, but God's right hand*

and his arm, Ps. 44:3. *The Lord discomfited them before Israel*. Israel did what they could, and yet God did all. [1.] It must needs be a very great terror and confusion to the enemy to perceive that heaven itself fought against them; for who can contest with, flee from, or fence against, the powers of heaven? They had affronted the true God and robbed him of his honour by worshipping the host of heaven, giving that worship to the creature which is due to the Creator only; and now the host of heaven fights against them, and even that part of the creation which they had idolized is at war with them, and even triumphs in their ruin, Jer. 8:2. There is no way of making any creature propitious to us, no, not by sacrifice nor offering, but only by making our peace with God and keeping ourselves in his love. This had been enough to make them an easy prey to the victorious Israelites, yet this was not all. [2.] Besides the terror struck upon them, there was a great slaughter made of them by hail-stones, which were so large, and came down with such a force, that more were killed by the hail-stones than by the sword of the Israelites, though no doubt they were busy. God himself speaks to Job of treasures, or magazines, of snow and hail, which he has *reserved for the day of battle and war* (Job 38:22, 23), and here they are made use of to destroy the Canaanites. Here was hail, shot from God's great ordnance, that, against whomsoever it was directed, was sure to hit (and never glanced upon the Israelites mixed with them), and wherever it hit was sure to kill. See here how miserable those are that have God for their enemy, and how sure to perish; it is a fearful thing to fall into his hands, for there is no fleeing out of them. Some observe that Beth-horon lay north of Gibeon, Azekah and Makkedah lay south, so that they fled each way but, which way soever they fled, the hail-stones pursued them, and met them at every turn.

2. The great faith of Joshua, and the power of God crowning it with the miraculous arrest of the sun, that the day of Israel's victories might be prolonged, and so the enemy totally defeated. The hail-stones had their rise no higher than the clouds, but, to show that Israel's help came from above the clouds, the sun itself, who by his constant motion serves the whole earth, by halting when there was occasion served the Israelites, and did them a kindness. *The sun and moon stood still in their habitation, at the light of thy arrows* which gave the signal, Hab. 3:11.

(1.) Here is the prayer of Joshua that the sun might stand still. I call it his prayer, because it is said (v. 12) *he spoke to the Lord*; as Elijah, though we read (1 Ki. 17:1) only of his prophesying of the drought, yet is said (James 5:17) to pray for it. Observe, [1.] An instance of Joshua's unwearied activity in the service of God and Israel, that though he had marched all night and fought all day, and, one might expect, would be inclined to repose himself and get a little sleep, and give his army some time to rest—that, like the hireling, he would earnestly desire the shadow, and bid the night welcome, when he had done such a good day's work—yet, instead of this, he wishes for nothing so much as the prolonging of the day. Note, Those that *wait on the Lord* and work for him *shall renew their strength, shall run and not be weary, shall walk and not faint*, Isa. 40:31. [2.] An instance of his great faith in the almighty power of God, as above the power of nature, and able to control and alter the usual course of it. No doubt Joshua had an extraordinary impulse or impression upon his spirit, which he knew to be of divine origin, prompting him to desire that this miracle might be wrought upon this occasion, else it would have been presumption in him to desire or expect; the prayer would not have been granted by the divine power, if it had not been dictated by the divine grace. God wrought this faith in him, and then said, *"According to thy faith, and thy prayer of faith, be it unto thee."* It cannot be

imagined, however, that such a thing as this should have entered into his mind if God had not put it there; a man would have had a thousand projects in his head for the completing of the victory before he would have thought of desiring the sun to stand still; but even in the Old-Testament saints *the Spirit made intercession according to the will of God*. What God will give he inclines the hearts of his praying people to ask, and for what he will do he will be enquired of, Eze. 36:37. Now, *First*, It looked great for Joshua to say, *Sun, stand thou still*. His ancestor Joseph had indeed dreamed that the sun and moon did homage to him; but who would have thought that, after it had been fulfilled in the figure, it should be again fulfilled in the letter to one of his posterity? The prayer is thus expressed with authority, because it was not an ordinary prayer, such as is directed and supported only by God's common providence or promise, but the prayer of a prophet at this time divinely inspired for this purpose; and yet it intimates to us the prevalency of prayer in general, so far as it is regulated by the word of God, and may remind us of that honour put upon prayer (Isa. 45:11), *Concerning the work of my hands command you me*. He bids the sun stand still upon Gibeon, the place of action and the seat of war, intimating that what he designed in this request was the advantage of Israel against their enemies; it is probable that the sun was now declining, and that he did not call for the lengthening out of the day until he observed it hastening towards its period. He does likewise, in the name of the King of kings, arrest the moon, perhaps because it was requisite for the preserving of the harmony and good order of the spheres that the course of the rest of the heavenly bodies should be stayed likewise, otherwise, while the sun shone, he needed not the moon; and here he mentions the valley of Ajalon, which was near to Gibeon, because there he was at that time. *Secondly*, It was bold indeed to say so before Israel, and argues a very strong assurance of faith. If the event had not answered the demand, nothing could have been a greater slur upon him; the Israelites would have concluded he was certainly going mad, or he would never have talked so extravagantly. But he knew very well God would own and answer a petition which he himself directed to be drawn up and presented, and therefore was not afraid to say before all Israel, calling them to observe this work of wonder, *Sun, stand thou still*, for he was confident in him whom he had trusted. He believed the almighty power of God, else he could not have expected that the sun, going on in its strength, driving in a full career, and *rejoicing as a strong man to run a race*, should be stopped in an instant. He believed the sovereignty of God in the kingdom of nature, else he could not have expected that the established law and course of nature should be changed and interrupted, the ordinances of heaven, and the constant usage according to these ordinances, broken in upon. And he believed God's particular favour to Israel above all people under the sun, else he could not have expected that, to favour them upon an emergency with a double day, he should (which must follow of course) amaze and terrify so great a part of the terrestrial globe with a double night at the same time. It is true, he *causeth the sun to shine upon the just and the unjust*; but for this once the unjust shall wait for it beyond the usual time, while, in favour to righteous Israel, it stands still.

(2.) The wonderful answer to this prayer. No sooner said than done (v. 13): *The sun stood still, and the moon staid*.

Notwithstanding the vast distance between the earth and the sun, at the word of Joshua the sun stopped immediately; for the same God that rules in heaven above rules at the same time on this earth, and, when he pleases, *even the heavens shall hear the earth*, as here. Concerning this great miracle it is here said, [1.] *That it continued a whole day*, that is, the sun continued as long

again above the horizon as otherwise it would have done. It is commonly supposed to have been about the middle of summer that this happened, when, in that country, it was about fourteen hours between sun and sun, so that this day was about twenty-eight hours long; yet, if we suppose it to have been at that time of the year when the days are at the shortest, it will be the more probable that Joshua should desire and pray for the prolonging of the day. [2.] That hereby the people had full time to avenge themselves of their enemies, and to give them a total defeat. We often read in history of battles which the night put an end to, the shadows of which favoured the retreat of the conquered; to prevent this advantage to the enemy in their flight, the day was doubled, that the hand of Israel might *find out all their enemies*; but the eye and hand of God can find them out without the help of the sun's light, for to him *the night shineth as the day*, Ps. 139:12. Note, Sometimes God completes a great salvation in a little time, and makes but one day's work of it. Perhaps this miracle is alluded to Zec. 14:6, 7, where the day of God's fighting against the nations is said to be *one day*, and that *at evening time it shall be light*, as here. And, [3.] That there was *never any day like it*, before or since, in which God put such an honour upon faith and prayer, and upon Israel's cause; never did he so wonderfully comply with the request of a man, nor so wonderfully fight for his people. [4.] This is said to be written *in the book of Jasher*, a collection of state-poems, in which the poem made upon this occasion was preserved among the rest; probably the same with that *book of the wars of the Lord* (Num. 21:14), which afterwards was continued and carried on by one Jasher. Those words, *Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon, and thou moon in the valley of Ajalon*, sounding metrical, are supposed to be taken from the narrative of this event as it was found in the book of Jasher. Not that the divine testimony of the book of Joshua needed confirmation from the book of Jasher, a human composition; but to those who had that book in their hands it would be of use to compare this history with it, which warrants the appeals the learned make to profane history for corroborating the proofs of the truth of sacred history. [5.] But surely this stupendous miracle of the standing still of the sun was intended for something more than merely to give Israel so much the more time to find out and kill their enemies, which, without this, might have been done the next day. *First*, God would hereby magnify Joshua (ch. 3:7), as a particular favourite, and one whom he did delight to honour, being a type of him who has all power both in heaven and in earth and whom the winds and the seas obey. *Secondly*, He would hereby notify to all the world what he was doing for his people Israel here in Canaan; the sun, the eye of the world, must be fixed for some hours upon Gibeon and the valley of Ajalon, as if to contemplate the great works of God there for Israel, and so to engage the children of men to look that way, and to *enquire of this wonder done in the land*, 2 Chr. 32:31. Proclamation was hereby made to all the neighbouring nations. *Come, behold the works of the Lord* (Ps. 46:8), and say, *What nation is there so great as Israel is, who has God so nigh unto them?* One would have supposed that this would bring such real ambassadors as the Gibeonites pretended to be from a very far country, to court the friendship of Israel because of the name of the Lord their God. *Thirdly*, He would hereby convince and confound those idolaters that worshipped the sun and moon and gave divine honours to them, by demonstrating that they were subject to the command of the God of Israel, and that, as high as they were, he was above them; and thus he would fortify his people against temptations to this idolatry, which he foresaw they would be addicted to (Deu. 4:19), and which, notwithstanding this, they afterwards corrupted themselves with. *Fourthly*, This miracle signified (it is the learned bishop Pierson's notion) that in the latter days,

when the light of the world was tending towards a light of darkness, the *Sun of righteousness*, even our Joshua, should arise (Mal. 4:2), give check to the approaching night, and be the true light. To which let me add that when Christ conquered our spiritual enemies upon the cross the miracle wrought on the sun was the reverse of this; it was then darkened as if it had gone down at noon, for Christ needed not the light of the sun to carry on his victories: he then made darkness his pavilion. And, *Lastly*, The arresting of the sun and moon in this day of battle prefigured the turning of the sun into darkness, and the moon into blood, in the last great and terrible day of the Lord.

Verses 15-27

It was a brave appearance, no doubt, which the five kings made when they took the field for the reducing of Gibeon, and a brave army they had following them; but they were all routed, put into disorder first, and then brought to destruction by the hail-stones. And now Joshua thought, his work being done, he might go with his army into quarters of refreshment.

Accordingly it was resolved, perhaps in a council of war, that they should presently return *to the camp at Gilgal* (v. 15), till they should receive orders from God to take possession of the country they had now conquered; but he soon finds he has more work cut out for him. The victory must be pursued, that the spoils might be divided. Accordingly he applies himself to it with renewed vigour.

I. The forces that had dispersed themselves must be followed and smitten. When tidings were brought to Joshua where the kings were he ordered a guard to be set upon them for the present (v. 18), *reserving them* for another *day of destruction*, and to be *brought forth to a day of wrath*, Job 21:30. He directs his men to pursue the common soldiers, as much as might be, to prevent their escaping to the garrisons, which would strengthen them, and make the reduction of them the more difficult, v. 19. Like a prudent general, he does that first which is most needful, and defers his triumphs till he has completed his conquests; nor was he in such haste to insult over the captive kings but that he would first prevent the rallying again of their scattered forces. The result of this vigorous pursuit was, 1. That a very great slaughter was made of the enemies of God and Israel. And, 2. The field was cleared of them, so that none remained but such as got into fenced cities, where they would not long be safe themselves, nor were they capable of doing any service to the cities that sheltered them, unless they could have left their fears behind them. 3. *None moved his tongue against any of the children of Israel*, v. 21. This expression intimates, (1.) Their perfect safety and tranquillity; some think it should be read (from Ex. 11:7), *Against any of the children of Israel did not a dog move his tongue*; no, not against any one man of them. They were not threatened by any danger at all after their victory, no, not so much as the barking of a dog. Not one single Israelite (for the original makes it so particular) was brought into any distress, either in the battle or in the pursuit. (2.) Their honour and reputation; no man had any reproach to cast upon them, nor an ill word to give them. God not only tied the hands, but stopped the mouths, of their enraged enemies, and put lying lips to silence. (3.) The Chaldee paraphrase makes it an expression of their unalloyed joy for this victory, reading it, *There was no hurt nor loss to the children of Israel, for which any man should afflict his soul*. When the army came to be reviewed after the battle, there was none slain, none wounded, none missing. Not one Israelite had occasion to lament either the loss of a friend or the loss of a limb, so cheap, so easy, so glorious, was this victory.

II. The kings that had hidden themselves must now be called to an account, as rebels against the Israel of God, to whom, by the divine promise and grant, this land did of right belong and should have been surrendered upon demand. See here,

1. How they were secured. The cave which they fled to, and trusted in for a refuge, became their prison, in which they were clapped up, till Joshua sat in judgment on them, v. 18. It seems they all escaped both the hail-stones and the sword, God so ordering it, not in kindness to them, but that they might be reserved for a more solemn and terrible execution; as, for this cause, Pharaoh survived the plagues of Egypt, and was made to stand, that God might in him *show his power*, Ex. 9:16. They all fled, and met at the same place, Providence directing them; and now those who were lately consulting against Israel were put upon new counsels to preserve themselves and agreed to take shelter in the same cave. The information brought to Joshua of this is an evidence that there were those of the country, who knew the holes and fastnesses of it, that were in his interests. And the care Joshua took to keep them there when they were there, as it is an instance of his policy and presence of mind, even in the heat of action, so, in the result of their project, it shows how those not only deceive themselves, but destroy themselves, who think to hide themselves from God. Their refuge of lies will but bind them over to God's judgment.

2. How they were triumphed over. Joshua ordered them to be brought forth out of the cave, set before him as at the bar, and their names called over, v. 22, 23. And when they either were bound and cast upon the ground unable to help themselves, or threw themselves upon the ground, humbly to beg for their lives, he called for the general officers and great men, and commanded them to trample upon these kings, and set their feet upon their necks, not in sport and to make themselves and the company merry, but with the gravity and decorum that became the ministers of the divine justice who were not herein to gratify any pride or passion of their own, but to give glory to the God of Israel as higher than the highest, who *treads upon princes as mortar* (Isa. 41:25), and *is terrible to the kings of the earth*, Ps. 76:12. The thing does indeed look barbarous, thus to insult over men in misery, who had suddenly fallen from the highest pitch of honour into this disgrace. It was hard for crowned heads to be thus trodden upon, not by Joshua himself (that might better have been borne), at least not by him only, but by all the captains of the army. Certainly it ought not to be drawn into a precedent, for the case was extraordinary, and we have reason to think it was by divine direction and impulse that Joshua did this. (1.) God would hereby punish the abominable wickedness of these kings, the measure of whose iniquity was now full. And, by this public act of justice done upon these ringleaders of the Canaanites in sin, he would possess his people with the greater dread and detestation of those sins of *the nations that God cast out from before them*, which they would be tempted to imitate. (2.) He would hereby have the promise by Moses made good (Deu. 33:29), *Thou shalt tread upon their high places*, that is, their great men, which should the rather be speedily fulfilled in the letter because they are the very last words of Moses that we find upon record. (3.) He would hereby encourage the faith and hope of his people Israel in reference to the wars that were yet before them. Therefore Joshua said (v. 25): *Fear not, nor be dismayed*. [1.] "Fear not these kings, nor any of theirs, as if there were any danger of having this affront now put upon them in after-time revenged upon yourselves, a consideration which keeps many from being insolent towards those they have at their mercy, because they know not how soon the uncertain fate of war may turn the same wheel upon themselves; but you need not fear that any should rise up ever to revenge this quarrel." [2.] "Fear not any other kings, who may

at any time be in confederacy against you, for you see these brought down, whom you thought formidable. *Thus shall the Lord do to all your enemies*; now that they begin to fall, to fall so low that you may set your feet on their necks, you may be confident that they shall not prevail, but shall *surely fall before you*," Esth. 6:13. (4.) He would hereby give a type and figure of Christ's victories over the powers of darkness, and believers' victories through him. All the enemies of the Redeemer shall be *made his footstool*, Ps. 110:1. And see Ps. 18:40. The *kings of the earth set themselves* against him (Ps. 2:2), but sooner or later we shall see all things put under Him (Heb. 2:8), and *principalities and powers* made a show of, Col. 2:15. And in these triumphs we are more than conquerors, may *tread upon the lion and adder* (Ps. 91:13), may *ride on the high places of the earth* (Isa. 58:14), and may be confident that *the God of peace shall tread Satan under our feet*, shall do it shortly and do it effectually, Rom. 16:20. See Ps. 149:8, 9.

3. How they were put to death. Perhaps, when they had undergone that terrible mortification of being trodden upon by the captains of Israel, they were ready to say, as Agag, *Surely the bitterness of death is past*, and that *sufficient unto them was this punishment which was inflicted by many*; but their honours cannot excuse their lives, their forfeited devoted lives. Joshua smote them with the sword, and then hanged up their bodies till evening, when they were taken down, and thrown *into the cave in which they had hidden themselves*, v. 26, 27. That which they thought would have been their shelter was made their prison first and then their grave; so shall we be disappointed in that which we flee to from God: yet to good people the grave is still *a hiding-place*, Job 14:13. If these five kings had humbled themselves in time, and had begged peace instead of waging war, they might have saved their lives; but now the decree had gone forth, and they *found no place for repentance*, or the reversal of the judgment; it was too late to expect it, though perhaps *they sought it carefully with tears*.

Verses 28-43

We are here informed how Joshua improved the late glorious victory he had obtained and the advantages he had gained by it, and to do this well is a general's praise.

I. Here is a particular account of the several cities which he immediately made himself master of. 1. The cities of three of the kings whom he had conquered in the field he went and took possession of, Lachish (v. 31, 32), Eglon (v. 34, 35), and Hebron, v. 36, 37. The other two, Jerusalem and Jarmuth, were not taken at this time; perhaps his forces were either so much fatigued with what they had done or so well content with what they had got that they had no mind to attack those places, and so they let slip the fairest opportunity they could ever expect of reducing them with ease, which afterwards was not done without difficulty, Jdg. 1:8; 2 Sa. 5:6. 2. Three other cities, and royal cities too, he took: Makedah, into the neighbourhood of which the five kings had fled, which brought Joshua and his forces thither in pursuit of them, and so hastened its ruin (v. 28), Libnah (v. 29, 30), and Debir, v. 38, 39. 3. One king that brought in his forces for the relief of Lachish, that had lost its king, proved to meddle to his own hurt; it was Horam king of Gezer, who, either in friendship to his neighbours or for his own security, offered to stop the progress of Joshua's arms, and was cut off with all his forces, v. 33. Thus wicked men are often snared in their counsels, and, by opposing God in the way of his judgments, bring them the sooner on their own heads.

II. A general account of the country which was hereby reduced and brought into Israel's hands (v. 40-42), that part of the land

of Canaan of which they first got possession, which lay south of Jerusalem, and afterwards fell, for the most part, to the lot of the tribe of Judah. Observe in this narrative,

1. The great speed Joshua made in taking these cities, which, some think, is intimated in the manner of relating it, which is quick and concise. He flew like lightning from place to place; and though they all stood it out to the last extremity, and none of these cities opened their gates to him, yet in a little time he got them all into his hands, summoned them, and seized them, the same day (v. 28), or in two days, v. 32. Now that they were struck with fear, by the defeat of their armies and the death of their kings, Joshua prudently followed his blow. See what a great deal of work may be done in a little time, if we will but be busy and improve our opportunities.

2. The great severity Joshua used towards those he conquered. He gave no quarter to man, woman, nor child, put to the sword *all the souls* (v. 28, 30, 32, 35, etc.), *utterly destroyed all that breathed* (v. 40), and *left none remaining*. Nothing could justify this military execution but that herein they did *as the Lord God of Israel commanded* (v. 40), which was sufficient not only to bear them out, and save them for the imputation of cruelty, but to sanctify what they did, and make it an acceptable piece of service to his justice. God would hereby, (1.) Manifest his hatred of the idolatries and other abominations which the Canaanites had been guilty of, and leave us to judge how great the provocation was which they had given him by the greatness of the destruction which was brought upon them when the measure of their iniquity was full. (2.) He would hereby magnify his love to his people Israel, in giving so many men for them, and *people for their life*, Isa. 43:4. When the *heathen are to be cast out to make room for this vine* (Ps. 80:8) divine justice appears more prodigal than ever of human blood, that the Israelites might find themselves for ever obliged to spend their lives to the glory of that God who had sacrificed so many of the lives of his creatures to their interest. (3.) Hereby was typified the final and eternal destruction of all the impenitent implacable enemies of the Lord Jesus, who, having slighted the riches of his grace, must for ever feel the weight of his wrath, and shall *have judgment without mercy*. *Nations that forget God shall be turned into hell*, and no reproach at all to God's infinite goodness.

3. The great success of this expedition. The spoil of these cities was now divided among the men of war that plundered them; and the cities themselves, with the land about them, were shortly to be divided among the tribes, for the Lord *fought for Israel*, v. 42. They could not have gotten the victory if God had not undertaken the battle; then we conquer when God fights for us; and, *if he be for us, who can be against us?*

Chapter 11

This chapter continues and concludes the history of the conquest of Canaan; of the reduction of the southern parts we had an account in the foregoing chapter, after which we may suppose Joshua allowed his forces some breathing-time; now here we have the story of the war in the north, and the happy success of that war. I. The confederacy of the northern crowns against Israel (v. 1-5). II. The encouragement which God gave to Joshua to engage them (v. 6). III. His victory over them (v. 7-9). IV. The taking of their cities (v. 10-15). V. The destruction of the Anakim (v. 21, 22). VI. The general conclusion of the story of this war (v. 16-20, 23).

Verses 1-9

We are here entering upon the story of another campaign that Joshua made, and it was a glorious one, no less illustrious than the former in the success of it, though in respect of miracles it was inferior to it in glory. The wonders God then wrought for them were to animate and encourage them to act vigorously themselves. Thus the war carried on by the preaching of the gospel against Satan's kingdom was at first forwarded by miracles; but, the war being by them sufficiently proved to be of God, the managers of it are now left to the ordinary assistance of divine grace in the use of the sword of the Spirit, and must not expect hail-stones nor the standing still of the sun. In this story we have,

I. The Canaanites taking the field against Israel. They were the aggressors, God hardening their hearts to begin the war, that Israel might be justified beyond exception in destroying them. Joshua and all Israel had returned to the camp at Gilgal, and perhaps these kings knew no other than that they intended to sit down content with the conquest they had already made, and yet they prepare war against them. Note, Sinners bring ruin upon their own heads, so that *God will be justified when he speaks*, and they alone shall bear the blame for ever. Judah had now *couched as a lion gone up from the prey*; if the northern kings rouse him up, it is at their peril, Gen. 49:9. Now, 1. Several nations joined in this confederacy, some *in the mountains* and some *in the plains*, v. 2. Canaanites from east and west, Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, etc. (v. 3), of different constitutions and divided interests among themselves, and yet they here unite against Israel as against a common enemy. Thus are *the children of this world* more unanimous, and therein *wiser, than the children of light*. The oneness of the church's enemies should shame the church's friends out of their discords and divisions, and engage them to be one. 2. The head of this confederacy was *Jabin king of Hazor* (v. 1), as Adoni-zedec was of the former; it is said (v. 10) Hazor had been the *head of all those kingdoms*, which could not have revolted without occasioning ill-will; but this was forgotten and laid aside upon this occasion, by consent of parties, Lu. 23:12. When they had all drawn up their forces together, every kingdom bringing in its quota, they were a very great army, much greater than the former, *as the sand on the sea shore in multitude*, and upon this account much stronger and more formidable, that they had horses and chariots very many, which we do not find the southern kings had; hereby they had a great advantage against Israel, for their army consisted only of foot, and they never brought horses nor chariots into the field. Josephus tells us that the army of the Canaanites consisted of 300,000 foot, 10,000 horses, and 20,000 chariots. *Many there be that rise up* against God's Israel; doubtless their numbers made them very confident of success, but it proved that so much the

greater slaughter was made of them.

II. The encouragement God gave to Joshua to give them the meeting, even upon the ground of their own choosing (v. 6): *Be not afraid because of them*. Joshua was remarkable for his courage—it was his master grace, and yet it seems he had need to be again and again cautioned not to be afraid. Fresh dangers and difficulties make it necessary to fetch in fresh supports and comforts from the word of God, which we have always nigh unto us, to be made use of in every time of need. Those that have God on their side need not be disturbed at the number and power of their enemies; *more are those that are with us than those that are against us*; those have the hosts of the Lord that have the Lord of hosts engaged for them. For his encouragement, 1. God assures him of success, and fixes the hour: *To-morrow about this time*, when an engagement (it is probable) was expected and designed on both sides, *I will deliver them up slain*. Though they were to be slain by the sword of Israel, yet it is spoken of as God's work, that he would deliver them up. 2. He appoints him to *hough their horses, hamstring them, lame them, and burn their chariots*, not only that Israel might not use them hereafter, but that they might not fear them now, their God designing this contempt to be put upon them. Let Israel look upon their chariots but as rotten wood designed for the fire, and their horses of war as disabled things, scarcely good enough for the cart. This encouragement which God here gave to Joshua no doubt he communicated to the people, who perhaps were under some apprehensions of danger from this vast army, notwithstanding the experience they had had of God's power engaged for them. And the wisdom and goodness of God are to be observed, (1.) In infatuating the counsels of the enemy, that all the kings of Canaan, who were not dispersed at such a distance from each other but that they might have got all together in a body, did not at first confederate against Israel, but were divided into the southern and northern combination, and so became the less formidable. And, (2.) In preparing his people to encounter the greater force, by breaking the less. They first engage with five kings together, and now with many more. God proportions our trials to our strength and our strength to our trials.

III. Joshua's march against these confederate forces, v. 7. He *came upon them suddenly*, and surprised them in their quarters. He made this haste, 1. That he might put them into the greater confusion, by giving them an alarm, when they little thought he was near them. 2. That he might be sure not to come short of the honour God had fixed, to give him the meeting at the enemies' camp, *to-morrow about this time*. It is fit we should keep time with God.

IV. His success, v. 8. He obtained the honour and advantage of a complete victory; he smote them and chased them, in the several ways they took in their flight; some fled towards Zidon, which lay to the northwest, others towards Mizpeh, eastward, but the parties Joshua sent out pursued them each way. So *the Lord delivered them into the hand of Israel*; they would not deliver themselves into the hands of Israel to be made proselytes and tributaries, and so offered up to God's grace (Rom. 15:16), and therefore God delivered them into their hands to be made sacrifices to his justice; for God will be honoured by us or upon us.

V. His obedience to the orders given him, in destroying the horses and chariots (v. 9), which was an instance, 1. Of his subjection to the divine will, as one under authority, that must do as he is bidden. 2. Of his self-denial, and crossing his own genius and inclination in compliance with God's command. 3. Of his confidence in the power of God engaged for Israel, which

enabled them to despise the chariots and horses which others trusted in, Ps. 20:7; 33:17. 4. Of his care to keep up in the people the like confidence in God, by taking that from them which they would be tempted to trust too much to. This was *cutting of a right hand*.

Verses 10-14

We have here the same improvement made of this victory as was made of that in the foregoing chapter. 1. The destruction of Hazor is particularly recorded, because in it, and by the king thereof, this daring design against Israel was laid, v. 10, 11. The king of Hazor, it seems, escaped with his life out of the battle, and thought himself safe when he had got back into his own city, and Joshua had gone in pursuit of the scattered troops another way. But it proved that that which he thought would be for his welfare was his trap; in it *he was taken as in an evil net*; there he was slain, and his city, for his sake, burned. Yet we find that the remains of it being not well looked after by Israel the Canaanites rebuilt it, and settled there under another king of the same name, Jdg. 4:2. 2. The rest of the cities of that part of the country are spoken of only in general, that Joshua got them all into his hands, but did not burn them as he did Hazor, for Israel was to dwell in *great and goodly cities which they builded not* (Deu. 6:10) and in these among the rest. And here we find Israel rolling in blood and treasure. (1.) In the blood of their enemies; *they smote all the souls* (v. 1), *neither left they any to breathe* (v. 14), that there might be none to infect them with the abominations of Canaan, and none to disturb them in the possession of it. The children were cut off, lest they should afterwards lay claim to any part of this land in the right of their parents. (2.) In the wealth of their enemies. The spoil, and the cattle, they *took for a prey to themselves*, v. 14. As they were enriched with the spoil of their oppressors when they came out of Egypt, wherewith to defray the charges of their apprenticeship in the wilderness, so they were now enriched with the spoil of their enemies for a stock wherewith to set up in the land of Canaan. Thus is the wealth of the sinner laid up for the just.

Verses 15-23

We have here the conclusion of this whole matter.

I. A short account is here given of what was done in four things:-1. The obstinacy of the Canaanites in their opposition to the Israelites. It was strange that though it appeared so manifestly that God fought for Israel, and in every engagement the Canaanites had the worst of it, yet they stood it out to the last; not one city made peace with Israel, but the Gibeonites only, who understood the things that belonged to their peace better than their neighbours, v. 19. It is intimated that other cities might have made as good terms for themselves, without ragged clothes and clouted shoes, if they would have humbled themselves, but they never so much as *desired conditions of peace*. We here are told whence this unaccountable infatuation came: *It was of the Lord to harden their hearts*, v. 20. As Pharaoh's heart was hardened by his own pride and wilfulness first, and afterwards by the righteous judgment of God, to his destruction, so were the hearts of these Canaanites. To punish them for all their other follies, God left them to this, to make those their enemies whom they might have made their friends. This was it that ruined them: they *came against Israel in battle*, and gave the first blow, and therefore *might have no favour* shown them. Those know not what they do who give the provocation to divine justice, or the authorized instruments of it. *Are we stronger than God?* Observe here, That hardness of heart is the ruin of sinners. Those that are stupid and secure, and heedless of divine warnings,

are already marked for destruction. What hope is there of those concerning whom God has said, *Go, make their hearts fat?* 2. The constancy of the Israelites in prosecuting this war (v. 18): *Joshua made war a long time*; some reckon it five years, others seven, that were spent in subduing this land: so long God would train up Israel to war, and give them repeated instances of his power and goodness in every new victory that he gave them. 3. The conquest of the Anakim at last, v. 21, 22. Either this was done as they met with them where they were dispersed, as some think, or rather it should seem the Anakim had retired to their fastnesses, and so were hunted out and cut off at last, after all the rest of Israel's enemies. The mountains of Judah and Israel were the habitations of those mountains of men; but not their height, nor the strength of their caves, nor the difficulty of the passes to them, could secure, no, not these mighty men, from the sword of Joshua. The cutting off of the sons of Anak is particularly mentioned because these had been such a terror to the spies forty years before, and their bulk and strength had been thought an insuperable difficulty in the way of the reducing of Canaan, Num. 13:28, 33. Even that opposition which seemed invincible was got over. Never let the sons of Anak be a terror to the Israel of God, for even their day will come to fall. Giants are dwarfs to Omnipotence; yet this struggle with the Anakim was reserved for the latter end of the war, when the Israelites had become more expert in the arts of war, and had had more experience of the power and goodness of God. Note, God sometimes reserves the sharpest trials of his people by affliction and temptation for the latter end of their days. Therefore *let not him that girds on the harness boast as he that puts it off*. Death, that tremendous son of Anak, is the last enemy that is to be encountered; but it is *to be destroyed*, 1 Co. 15:26. Thanks be to God, who will give us the victory. 4. The end and issue of this long war. The Canaanites were rooted out, not perfectly (as we shall find after in the book of Judges), but in a good measure; they were not able to make any head either, (1.) So as to keep the Israelites out of possession of the land: *Joshua took all that land*, v. 16, 17. And we may suppose the people dispersed themselves and their families into the countries they had conquered, at least those that lay nearest to the head-quarters at Gilgal, until an orderly distribution should be made by lot, that every man might know his own. Or, (2.) So as to keep them in action, or give them any molestation (v. 23): *The land rested from war*. It ended not in a peace with the Canaanites (that was forbidden), but in a peace from them. There is a rest, a rest from war, remaining for the people of God, into which they shall enter when their warfare is accomplished.

II. That which was now done is here compared with that which had been said to Moses. God's word and his works, if viewed and considered together, will mutually illustrate each other. It is here observed in the close, 1. That all the precepts God had given to Moses relating to the conquest of Canaan were obeyed on the people's part, at least while Joshua lived. See how solemnly this is remarked (v. 15): *As the Lord commanded Moses his servant*, by whose hand the law was given, *so did Moses command Joshua*, for Moses was faithful, as a law-giver, to him that appointed him; he did his part, and then he died: but were the commands of Moses observed when he was in his grave? Yes, they were: *So did Joshua*, who was, in his place, as faithful as Moses in his. *He left nothing undone* (Heb. he removed nothing) *of all that the Lord commanded Moses*. Those that leave their duty undone do what they can to remove or make void the command of God, by which they are bound to do it; but Joshua, by performing the precept, *confirmed* it, as the expression is, Deu. 27:26. Joshua was himself a great commander, and yet nothing was more his praise than his obedience. Those that rule others at their will must themselves be ruled by the divine

will; then their power is indeed their honour, and not otherwise. The pious obedience for which Joshua is here commended respects especially the command to destroy the Canaanites, and to *break down their altars and burn their images*, Deu. 7:2-5; Ex. 23:24; 34:13. Joshua, in his zeal for the Lord of hosts, spared neither the idols nor the idolaters. Saul's disobedience, or rather his partial obedience, to the command of God, for the utter destruction of the Amalekites, cost him his kingdom. It should seem Joshua himself gives this account of his most careful and punctual observance of his orders in the execution of his commission, that in all respects he had done as Moses commanded him; and then it intimates that he had more pleasure and satisfaction in reflecting upon his obedience to the commands of God in all this war, and valued himself more upon that, than upon all the gains and triumphs with which he was enriched and advanced. 2. That all the promises God had given to Moses relating to this conquest were accomplished *on his part*, v. 23. Joshua *took the whole land*, conquered it, and took possession of it, *according to all that the Lord said unto Moses*. God had promised to drive out the nations before them (Ex. 33:2; 34:11), and to *bring them down*, Deu. 9:3. And now it was done. There failed not one word of the promise. Our successes and enjoyments are then doubly sweet and comfortable to us when we see them flowing to us from the promise (this is *according to what the Lord said*), as our obedience is then acceptable to God when it has an eye to the precept. And, if we make conscience of our duty, we need not question the performance of the promise.

Chapter 12

This chapter is a summary of Israel's conquests. I. Their conquests under Moses, on the other side Jordan (for we now suppose ourselves in Canaan) eastward, which we had the history of, Num. 21:24, etc. And here the abridgment of that history (v. 1-6). II. Their conquests under Joshua, on this side Jordan, westward. 1. The country they reduced (v. 7, 8). 2. The kings they subdued, thirty-one in all (v. 9-24). And this comes in here, not only as a conclusion of the history of the wars of Canaan (that we might at one view see what they had got), but as a preface to the history of the dividing of Canaan, that all that might be put together which they were not to make a distribution of.

Verses 1-6

Joshua, or whoever else is the historian before he comes to sum up the new conquests Israel had made, in these verses receives their former conquests in Moses's time, under whom they became masters of the great and potent kingdoms of Sihon and Og. Note, Fresh mercies must not drown the remembrance of former mercies, nor must the glory of the present instruments of good to the church be suffered to eclipse and diminish the just honour of those who have gone before them, and who were the blessings and ornaments of their day. Joshua's services and achievements are confessedly great, but let not those under Moses be overlooked and forgotten, since God was the same who wrought both, and both put together proclaim him the Alpha and Omega of Israel's great salvation. Here is, 1. A description of this conquered country, the measure and bounds of it in general (v. 1): *From the river Arnon* in the south, to *Mount Hermon* in the north. In particular, here is a description of the kingdom of Sihon (v. 2, 3), and that of Og, v. 4, 5. Moses had described this country very particularly (Deu. 2:36; 3:4, etc.), and this description here agrees with his. King Og is said to dwell at Ashtaroth and Edrei (v. 4), probably because they were both his royal cities; he had palaces in both, and resided sometimes in one and sometimes in the other; one perhaps was his summer seat and the other his winter seat. But Israel took both from him, and made one grave to serve him that could not be content with one palace. 2. The distribution of this country. Moses assigned it to the two tribes and a half, at their request, and divided it among them (v. 6), of which we had the story at large, Num. 32. The dividing of it when it was conquered by Moses is here mentioned as an example to Joshua what he must do now that he had conquered the country on this side Jordan. Moses, in his time, gave to one part of Israel a very rich and fruitful country, but it was on the outside of Jordan; but Joshua gave to all Israel the holy land, the mountain of God's sanctuary, within Jordan: so the law conferred upon some few of God's spiritual Israel external temporal blessings, which were earnest of good things to come; but our Lord Jesus, the true Joshua, has provided for all the children of promise spiritual blessings—the privileges of the sanctuary, and the heavenly Canaan. The triumphs and grants of the law were glorious, but those of the gospel far exceed in glory.

Verses 7-24

We have here a brief summary of Joshua's conquests.

I. The limits of the country he conquered. It lay between Jordan on the east and the Mediterranean Sea on the west, and extended from Baal-gad near Lebanon in the north to Halak, which lay upon the country of Edom in the south, v. 7. The

boundaries are more largely described, Num. 34:2, etc. But what is here said is enough to show that God had been as good as his word, and had given them possession of all he had promised them by Moses, if they would but have kept it.

II. The various kinds of land that were found in this country, which contributed both to its pleasantness and to its fruitfulness, v. 8. There were mountains, not craggy, and rocky, and barren, which are frightful to the traveller and useless to the inhabitants, but fruitful hills, such as put forth *precious things* (Deu. 33:15), which charmed the spectator's eye and filled the owner's hand. And valleys, not mossy and boggy, but *covered with corn*, Ps. 65:13. There were plains, and springs to water them; and even in that rich land there were wildernesses too, or forests, which were not so thickly inhabited as other parts, yet had towns and houses in them, but served as foils to set off the more pleasant and fruitful countries.

III. The several nations that had been in possession of this country—Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, etc., all of them descended from Canaan, the accursed son of Ham, Gen. 10:15–18. Seven nations they are called (Deu. 7:1), and so many are there reckoned up, but here six only are mentioned, the Girgashites being either lost or left out, though we find them, Gen. 10:16 and 15:21. Either they were incorporated with some other of these nations, or, as the tradition of the Jews is, upon the approach of Israel under Joshua they all withdrew and went into Africa, leaving their country to be possessed by Israel, with whom they saw it was to no purpose to contend, and therefore they are not named among the nations that Joshua subdued.

IV. A list of the kings that were conquered and subdued by the sword of Israel, some in the field, others in their own cities, thirty-one in all, and very particularly named and counted, it should seem, in the order in which they were conquered; for the catalogue begins with the kings of Jericho and Ai, then takes in the king of Jerusalem and the princes of the south that were in confederacy with him, and then proceeds to those of the northern association. Now, 1. This shows what a very fruitful country Canaan then was, which could support so many kingdoms, and in which so many kings chose to throng together rather than disperse themselves into other countries, which we may suppose not yet inhabited, but where, though they might find more room, they could not expect such plenty and pleasure: this was the land God spied out for Israel; and yet at this day it is one of the most barren, despicable, and unprofitable countries in the world: such is the effect of the curse it lies under, since its possessors rejected Christ and his gospel, as was foretold by Moses, Deu. 29:23. 2. It shows what narrow limits men's ambition was then confined to. These kings contented themselves with the government, each of them, of one city and the towns and villages that pertained to it; and no one of them, for aught that appears, aimed to make himself master of the rest, but, when there was occasion, all united for the common safety. Yet it should seem that what was wanting in the extent of their territories was made up in the absoluteness of their power, their subjects being all their tenants and vassals, and entirely at their command. 3. It shows how good God was to Israel, in giving them victory over all these kings, and possession of all these kingdoms, and what obligations he hereby laid upon them to *observe his statutes and to keep his laws*, Ps. 105:44, 45. Here were thirty-one kingdoms, or seigniories, to be divided among nine tribes and a half of Israel. Of these there fell to the lot of Judah the kingdoms of Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, Eglon, Debir, Arad, Libnan, and Adullam, eight in all, besides part of the kingdom of Jerusalem and part of Geder. Benjamin had the kingdoms of Jericho, Ai, Jerusalem, Makkedah, Beth-el, and the nations of Gilgal, six in all. Simeon had the kingdom of Hormah and part of Geder. Ephraim had the kingdoms of Gezer and

Tirzah. Manasseh (that half-tribe) had the kingdoms of Tappuah and Hopher, Taanach and Megiddo. Asher had the kingdoms of Aphek and Achshaph. Zebulun had the kingdoms of Lasharon, Shimron-meron, and Jokneam. Naphtali had the kingdoms of Madon, Hazor, and Kedesh. And Issachar had that of Dor. These were some of the great and famous kings that God smote, *for his mercy endureth for ever; and gave their land for a heritage, even a heritage unto Israel his servant, for his mercy endureth for ever*, Ps. 136:17, etc.

Chapter 13

At this chapter begins the account of the dividing of the land of Canaan among the tribes of Israel by lot, a narrative not so entertaining and instructive as that of the conquest of it, and yet it is thought fit to be inserted in the sacred history, to illustrate the performance of the promise made to the fathers, that this land should be given to the seed of Jacob, to them and not to any other. The preserving of this distribution would be of great use to the Jewish nation, who were obliged by the law to keep up this first distribution, and not to transfer inheritances from tribe to tribe, Num. 36:9. It is likewise of use to us for the explaining of other scriptures: the learned know how much light the geographical description of a country gives to the history of it. And therefore we are not to skip over these chapters of hard names as useless and not to be regarded; where God has a mouth to speak and a hand to write we should find an ear to hear an eye to read; and God give us a heart to profit! In this chapter, I. God informs Joshua what parts of the country that were intended in the grant to Israel yet remained unconquered, and not got in possession (v. 1-6). II. He appoints him, notwithstanding, to make a distribution of what was conquered (v. 7). III. To complete this account, here is a repetition of the distribution Moses had made of the land on the other side Jordan; in general (v. 8-14), in particular, the lot of Reuben (v. 15-23), of Gad (v. 24-28), of the half tribe of Manasseh (v. 29-33).

Verses 1-6

Here, I. God puts Joshua in mind of his old age, v. 1. 1. It is said that Joshua was *old and stricken in years*, and he and Caleb were at this time the only old men among the thousands of Israel, none except them of all those who were numbered at Mount Sinai being now alive. He had been a man of war from his youth (Ex. 17:10); but now he yielded to the infirmities of age, with which it is in vain for the stoutest to think of contesting. It should seem Joshua had not the same strength and vigour in his old age that Moses had; all that come to old age do not find it alike good; generally, the days of old age are evil days, and such as there is no pleasure in, nor expectation of service from. 2. God takes notice of it to him: *God said to him, Thou art old*. Note, It is good for those who are *old and stricken in years* to be put in remembrance of their being so. Some have *gray hairs here and there upon them, and perceive it not* (Hos. 7:9); they do not care to think of it, and therefore need to be told of it, that they may be quickened to do the work of life, and make preparation for death, which is coming towards them apace. But God mentions Joshua's age and growing infirmities, (1.) As a reason why he should now lay by the thoughts of pursuing the war; he cannot expect to see an end of it quickly, for there remained much land, more perhaps than he thought, to be possessed, in several parts remote from each other: and it was not fit that at his age he should be put upon the fatigue of renewing the war, and carrying it to such distant places; no, it was enough for him that he had reduced the body of the country. "Let him be gathered to rest with honour and the thanks of his people for the good services he had done them, and let the conquering of the skirts of the country be left for those that shall come after." As he had entered into the labours of Moses, so let others enter into his, and bring forth the top-stone, the doing of which was reserved for David long after. Observe, God considers the frame of his people, and would not have them burdened with work above their strength. It cannot be expected that old people should do as they have done for God and their country. (2.) As a reason why he should speedily apply himself to the dividing of that which

he had conquered. That work must be done, and done quickly; it was necessary that he should preside in the doing of it, and therefore, he being *old and stricken in years*, and not likely to continue long, let him make this his concluding piece of service to God and Israel. All people, but especially old people, should set themselves to do that quickly which must be done before they die, lest death prevent them, Eccl. 9:10.

II. He gives him a particular account of the land that yet remained unconquered, which was intended for Israel, and which, in due time, they should be masters of if they did not put a bar in their own door. Divers places are here mentioned, some in the south, as the country of the Philistines, governed by five lords, and the land that lay towards Egypt (v. 2, 3), some westward, as that which lay towards the Sidonians (v. 4), some eastward, as all Lebanon (v. 5), some towards the north, as that in the entering in of Hamath, v. 5. Joshua is told this, and he made the people acquainted with it, 1. That they might be the more affected with God's goodness to them in giving them this good land, and might thereby be engaged to love and serve him; for, if this which they had was too little, God would moreover *give them such and such things*, 2 Sa. 12:8. 2. That they might not be tempted to make any league, or contract any dangerous familiarity with these their neighbours so as to learn their way, but might rather be jealous of them, as a people that kept them from their right and that they had just cause of quarrel with. 3. That they might keep themselves in a posture for war, and not think of putting off the harness so long as there remained any land to be possessed. Nor must we lay aside our spiritual armour, nor be off our watch, till our victory be completed in the kingdom of glory.

III. He promises that he would make the Israelites masters of all those countries that were yet unsubdued, though Joshua was old and not able to do it, old and not likely to live to see it done. Whatever becomes of us, and however we may be laid aside as despised broken vessels, God will do his own work in his own time (v. 6): *I will drive them out*. The original is emphatic: *"It is I that will do it*, I that can do it when thou are dead and gone, and will do it if Israel be not wanting to themselves." "I will do it by my Word," so the Chaldee here, as in many other places, "by the eternal Word, the captain of the hosts of the Lord." This promise that he would drive them out from before the children of Israel plainly supposes it as the condition of the promise that the children of Israel must themselves attempt their extirpation, must go up against them, else they could not be said to be driven out before them; if afterwards Israel, through sloth, or cowardice, or affection to these idolaters, sit still and let them alone, they must blame themselves, and not God, if they be not driven out. We must work out our salvation, and then God will work in us and work with us; we must resist our spiritual enemies, and then God will tread them under our feet; we must go forth to our Christian work and warfare, and then God will go forth before us.

Verses 7-33

Here we have, I. Orders given to Joshua to assign to each tribe its portion of this land, including that which was yet unsubdued, which must be brought into the lot, in a believing confidence that it should be conquered when Israel was multiplied so as to have occasion for it (v. 7): *Now divide this land*. Joshua thought all must be conquered before any must be divided. "No," said, God, "there is as much conquered as will serve your turn for the present; divide this, and make your best of it, and wait for the remainder hereafter." Note, We must take the comfort of what we have, though we cannot compass all we would have.

Observe,

1. The land must be divided among the several tribes, and they must not always live in common, as now they did. Which way soever a just property is acquired, it is the will of that God who has given the earth to the children of men that there should be such a thing, and that every man should know his own, and not invade that which is another's. The world must be governed, not by force, but right, by the law of equity, not of arms.

2. That it must be divided for an inheritance, though they got it by conquest. (1.) The promise of it came to them as an inheritance from their fathers; the land of promise pertained to the children of promise, who were thus beloved for their fathers' sakes, and in performance of the covenant with them. (2.) The possession of it was to be transmitted by them, as an inheritance to their children. Frequently, what is got by force is soon lost again; but Israel, having an incontestable title to this land by the divine grant, might see it hereby secured as an inheritance to their seed after them, and that God kept this mercy for thousands.

3. That Joshua must not divide it by his own will. Though he was a very wise, just, and good man, it must not be left to him to give what he pleased to each tribe; but he must do it by lot, which referred the matter wholly to God, and to his determination, for he it is that appoints the bounds of our habitation, and every man's judgment must proceed from him. But Joshua must preside in this affair, must manage this solemn appeal to Providence, and see that the lot was drawn fairly and without fraud, and that every tribe did acquiesce in it. The lot indeed *causeth contention to cease*, Prov. 18:18. But, if upon this lot any controversy should arise, Joshua by his wisdom and authority must determine it, and prevent any ill consequences of it. Joshua must have the honour of dividing the land, (1.) Because he had undergone the fatigue of conquering it: and when, through his hand, each tribe received its allotment, they would thereby be made the more sensible of their obligations to him. And what a pleasure must it needs be to a man of such a public spirit as Joshua was to see the people that were so dear to him eating of the labour of his hands! (2.) That he might be herein a type of Christ, who has not only conquered for us the gates of hell, but has opened to us the gates of heaven, and, having purchased the eternal inheritance for all believers, will in due time put them all in possession of it.

II. An account is here given of the distribution of the land on the other side Jordan among the Reubenites, and Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh. Observe,

1. How this account is introduced. It comes in, (1.) As the reason why this land within Jordan must be divided only to the nine tribes and a half, because the other two and a half were already provided for. (2.) As a pattern to Joshua in the work he had now to do. He had seen Moses distribute that land, which would give him some aid in distributing this, and thence he might take his measure; only this was to be done by lot, but it should seem Moses did that himself, according to the wisdom given unto him. (3.) As an inducement to Joshua to hasten the dividing of this land, that the nine tribes and a half might not be kept any longer than was necessary out of their possession, since their brethren of the two tribes and a half were so well settled in theirs; and God their common Father would not have such a difference made between his children.

2. The particulars of this account.

(1.) Here is a general description of the country that was given to the two tribes and a half, *which Moses gave them, even as*

Moses gave them, v. 8. The repetition implies a ratification of the grant by Joshua. Moses settled this matter, and, as Moses settled it, so shall it rest; Joshua will not, under any pretence whatsoever, go about to alter it. And a reason is intimated why he would not, because Moses was the servant of the Lord, and acted in this matter by secret direction from him and was faithful as a servant. Here we have, [1.] The fixing of the boundaries of this country, by which they were divided from the neighbouring nations, v. 9, etc. Israel must know their own and keep to it, and may not, under pretence of their being God's peculiar people, encroach upon their neighbours, and invade their rights and properties, to which they had a good and firm title by providence, though not, as Israel, a title by promise. [2.] An exception of one part of this country from Israel's possession, though it was in their grant, namely, the Geshurites and the Maachathites, v. 13. They had not leisure to reduce all the remote and obscure corners of the country in Moses's time, and afterwards they had no mind to it, being easy with what they had. Thus those who are not straitened in God's promises are yet straitened in their own faith, and prayers, and endeavours.

(2.) A very particular account of the inheritances of these two tribes and a half, how they were separated from each other, and what cites, with the towns, villages, and fields, commonly known and reputed to be appurtenances to them, belonged to each tribe. This is very fully and exactly set down in order that posterity might, in reading this history, be the more affected with the goodness of God to their ancestors, when they found what a large and fruitful country, and what abundance of great and famous cities, he put them in possession of (God's grants look best when we descend to the particulars); and also that the limits of every tribe being punctually set down in this authentic record disputes might be prevented, and such contests between the tribes as commonly happen where boundaries have not been adjusted nor this matter brought to a certainty. And we have reason to think that the register here prescribed and published of the lot of each tribe was of great use to Israel in after-ages, was often appealed to, and always acquiesced in, for the determining of *meum* and *tuum*—*mine* and *thine*.

[1.] We have here the lot of the tribe of Reuben, Jacob's first-born, who, though he had lost the dignity and power which pertained to the birthright, yet, it seems, had the advantage of being first served. Perhaps those of that tribe had an eye to this in desiring to be seated on that side Jordan, that, since they could not expect the benefit of the best lot, they might have the credit of the first. Observe, *First*, In the account of the lot of this tribe mention is made of the slaughter, 1. Of Sihon, king of the Amorites, who reigned in this country, and might have kept it and his life if he would have been neighbourly, and have suffered Israel to pass through his territories, but, by attempting to oppose them, justly brought ruin upon himself, Num. 21:21, etc. 2. Of the princes of Midian, who were slain afterwards in another war (Num. 31:8), and yet are here called *dukes of Sihon*, and are said to be *smitten with him*, because they were either tributaries to him, or, in his opposition to Israel, confederates with him, and hearty in his interests, and his fall made way for theirs not long after. 3. Of Balaam particularly, that would, if he could, have cursed Israel, and was soon after recompensed *according to the wickedness of his endeavour* (Ps. 28:4), for he fell with those that set him on. This was recorded before (Num. 31:8), and is here repeated, because the defeating of Balaam's purpose to curse Israel was the turning of that curse into a blessing, and was such an instance of the power and goodness of God as was fit to be had in everlasting remembrance. See Mic. 6:5. *Secondly*, Within the lot of this tribe was that Mount Pisgah from the top of which Moses took his view of the earthly Canaan and his flight to the heavenly. And not far off thence

Elijah was when he was fetched up to heaven in a chariot of fire. The separation of this tribe from the rest, by the river Jordan, was that which Deborah lamented; and the preference they gave to their private interests above the public was what she censured, Jdg. 5:15, 16. In this tribe lay Heshbon and Sibmah, famed for their fruitful fields and vineyards. See Isa. 16:8, 9; Jer. 47:32. This tribe, with that of Gad, was sorely shaken by Hazael king of Syria (2 Ki. 10:33), and afterwards dislodged and carried into captivity, twenty years before the general captivity of the ten tribes by the king of Assyria, 1 Chr. 5:26.

[2.] The lot of the tribe of Gad, v. 24–28. This lay north of Reuben's lot; the country of Gilead lay in this tribe, so famous for its balm that it is thought strange indeed if there be no balm in Gilead, and the cities of Jabesh-Gilead and Ramoth-Gilead which we often read of in scripture. Succoth and Penuel, which we read of in the story of Gideon, were in this tribe; and that forest which is called the *wood of Ephraim* (from the slaughter Jephthah made there of the Ephraimites), in which Absalom's rebellious army was beaten, while his father David lay at Mahanaim, one of the frontier-cities of this tribe, v. 26. Sharon, famous for roses, was in this tribe. And within the limits of this tribe lived those Gadarenes that loved their swine better than their Saviour, fitter to be called *Girgashites* than *Israelites*.

[3.] The lot of the half-tribe of Manasseh, v. 29–31. Bashan, the kingdom of Og, was in this allotment, famous for the best timber, witness the oaks of Bashan—and the best breed of cattle, witness the bulls and rams of Bashan. This tribe lay north of Gad, reached to Mount Hermon, and had in it part of Gilead. Mispah was in this half-tribe, and Jephthah was one of its ornaments; so was Elijah, for in this tribe was Thisbe, whence he is called the Tishbite; and Jair was another. In the edge of the tribe stood Chorazin, honoured with Christ's wondrous works, but ruined by his righteous woe for not improving them.

[4.] Twice in this chapter it is taken notice of that to the tribe of Levi *Moses gave no inheritance* (v. 14, 33), for so God had appointed, Num. 18:20. If they had been appointed to a lot entire by themselves, Moses would have served them first, not because it was his own tribe, but because it was God's; but they must be provided for in another manner; their habitations must be scattered in all the tribes, and their maintenance brought out of all the tribes, and God himself was the portion both of their inheritance and of their cup, Deu. 10:9; 18:2.

Chapter 14

Here is, I. The general method that was taken in dividing the land (v. 1-5). II. The demand Caleb made of Hebron, as his by promise, and therefore not to be put into the lot with the rest (v. 6–12). And Joshua's grant of that demand (v. 13–15). This was done at Gilgal, which was as yet their head-quarters.

Verses 1-5

The historian, having in the foregoing chapter given an account of the disposal of the countries on the other side Jordan, now comes to tell us what they did with the countries in the land of Canaan. They were not conquered to be left desert, *a habitation for dragons, and a court for owls*, Isa. 34:13. No, the Israelites that had hitherto been closely encamped in a body, and the greatest part of them such as never knew any other way of living, must now disperse themselves to replenish these new conquests. It is said of the earth, *God created it not in vain; he formed it to be inhabited*, Isa. 45:18. Canaan would have been subdued in vain if it had not been inhabited. Yet every man might not go and settle where he pleased, but as there seems to have been in the days of Peleg an orderly and regular division of the habitable earth among the sons of Noah (Gen. 10:25, 32), so there was now such a division of the land of Canaan among the sons of Jacob. God had given Moses directions how this distribution should be made, and those directions are here punctually observed. See Num. 26:53, etc.

I. The managers of this great affair were Joshua the chief magistrate, Eleazar the chief priest, and ten princes, one of each of the tribes that were now to have their inheritance, whom God himself had nominated (Num. 34:17, etc.) some years before; and, it should seem, they were all now in being, and attended this service, that every tribe, having a representative of its own, might be satisfied that there was fair dealing, and might the more contentedly sit down by its lot.

II. The tribes among whom this dividend was to be made were nine and a half. 1. Not the two and a half that were already seated (v. 3), though perhaps now that they saw what a good land Canaan was, and how effectually it was subdued, they might some of them repent their choice, and wish they had now been to have their lot with their brethren, upon which condition they would gladly have given up what they had on the other side Jordan; but it could not be admitted: they had made their election without power of revocation, and so must their doom be; they themselves have decided it, and they must adhere to their choice. 2. Not the tribe of Levi; this was to be otherwise provided for. God had distinguished them from, and dignified them above, the other tribes, and they must not now mingle themselves with them, nor cast in their lot among them, for this would entangle them in the affairs of this life, which would not consist with a due attendance on their sacred function. But, 3. Joseph made two tribes, Manasseh and Ephraim, pursuant to Jacob's adoption of Joseph's two sons, and so the number of the tribes was kept up to twelve, though Levi was taken out, which is intimated here (v. 4): *The children of Joseph were two tribes, therefore they gave no part to Levi*, they being twelve without them.

III. The rule by which they went was the lot, v. 2. *The disposal of that is of the Lord*, Prov. 16:33. It was here used in an affair of weight, and which could not otherwise be accommodated to universal satisfaction, and it was used in a solemn religious manner as an appeal to God, by consent of parties. In dividing by lot, 1. They referred themselves to God, and to his wisdom

and sovereignty, believing him fitter to determine for them than they for themselves. Ps. 47:4, *He shall choose our inheritance for us*. 2. They professed a willingness to abide by the determination of it; for every man must take what is his lot, and make the best of it. In allusion to this we are said to *obtain an inheritance in Christ* (Eph. 1:11), *εκτηροϋθημεν*—*we have obtained it by lot*, so the word signified; for it is obtained by a divine designation. Christ, our Joshua, gives eternal life to *many as were given him*, Jn. 17:2.

Verses 6-15

Before the lot was cast into the lap for the determining of the portions of the respective tribes, the particular portion of Caleb was assigned to him. He was now, except Joshua, not only the oldest man in all Israel, but was twenty years older than any of them, for all that were above twenty years old when he was forty were dead in the wilderness; it was fit therefore that this phoenix of his age should have some particular marks of honour put upon him in the dividing of the land. Now,

I. Caleb here presents his petition, or rather makes his demand, to have Hebron given him for a possession (*this mountain* he calls it, v. 12), and not to have that put into the lot with the other parts of the country. To justify his demand, he shows that God had long since, by Moses, promised him *that very mountain*; so that God's mind being already made known in this matter it would be a vain and needless thing to consult it any further by casting lots, by which we are to appeal to God in those cases only which cannot otherwise be decided, not in those which, like this, are already determined. Caleb is here called the *Kenezite*, some think from some remarkable victory obtained by him over the Kenezites, as the Romans gave their great generals titles from the countries they conquered, as Africanus, Germanicus, etc. Observe,

1. To enforce his petition, (1.) He brings the children of Judah, that is, the heads and great men of that tribe, along with him, to present it, who were willing thus to pay their respects to that ornament of their tribe, and to testify their consent that he should be provided for by himself, and that they would not take it as any reflection upon the rest of this tribe. Caleb was the person whom God had chosen out of that tribe to be employed in dividing the land (Num. 34:19), and therefore, lest he should seem to improve his authority as a commissioner for his own private advantage and satisfaction, he brings his brethren along with him, and waiving his own power, seems rather to rely upon their interest. (2.) He appeals to Joshua himself concerning the truth of the allegations upon which he grounded his petition: *Thou knowest the thing*, v. 6. (3.) He makes a very honourable mention of Moses, which he knew would not be at all displeasing to Joshua: Moses the *man of God* (v. 6), and the *servant of the Lord*, v. 7. What Moses said he took as from God himself, because Moses was his mouth and his agent, and therefore he had reason both to desire and expect that it should be made good. What can be more earnestly desired than the tokens of God's favour? And what more confidently expected than the grants of his promise?

2. In his petition he sets forth,

(1.) The testimony of his conscience concerning his integrity in the management of that great affair on which it proved the fate of Israel turned, the spying out of the land. Caleb was one of the twelve that were sent out on that errand (v. 7), and he now reflected upon it with comfort, and mentioned it, not in pride, but as that which, being the consideration of the grant, was necessary to be inserted in the plea, [1.] That he made his report as it was in his heart, that is, he spoke as he thought when he

spoke so honourably of the land of Canaan, so confidently of the power of God to put them in possession of it, and so contemptibly of the opposition that the Canaanites, even the Anakim themselves, could make against them, as we find he did, Num. 13:30; 14:7-9. He did not do it merely to please Moses, or to keep the people quiet, much less from a spirit of contradiction to his fellows, but from a full conviction of the truth of what he said and a firm belief of the divine promise. [2.] That herein he *wholly followed the Lord his God*, that is, he kept close to his duty, and sincerely aimed at the glory of God in it. He conformed himself to the divine will with an eye to the divine favour. He had obtained this testimony from God himself (Num. 14:24), and therefore it was not vain-glory in him to speak of it, any more than it is for those who have *God's Spirit witnessing with their spirits* that they are the children of God humbly and thankfully to tell others for their encouragement what God has done for their souls. Note, Those that follow God fully when they are young shall have both the credit and comfort of it when they are old, and the reward of it for ever in the heavenly Canaan. [3.] That he did this when all his brethren and companions in that service, except Joshua, did otherwise. They *made the heart of the people melt* (v. 8), and how pernicious the consequences of it were was very well known. It adds much to the praise of following God if we adhere to him when others desert and decline from him. Caleb needed not to mention particularly Joshua's conduct in this matter; it was sufficiently known, and he would not seem to flatter him; it was enough to say (v. 6), *Thou knowest what the Lord spoke concerning me and thee*.

(2.) The experience he had had of God's goodness to him ever since to this day. Though he had wandered with the rest in the wilderness, and had been kept thirty-eight years out of Canaan as they were, for that sin which he was so far from having a hand in that he had done his utmost to prevent it, yet, instead of complaining of this, he mentioned, to the glory of God, his mercy to him in two things:—[1.] That he was kept alive in the wilderness, not only notwithstanding the common perils and fatigues of that tedious march, but though all that generation of Israelites, except himself and Joshua, were one way or other cut off by death. With what a grateful sense of God's goodness to him does he speak it! (v. 10). *Now behold* (behold and wonder) *the Lord hath kept me alive these forty and five years*, thirty-eight years in the wilderness, through the plagues of the desert, and seven years in Canaan through the perils of war! Note, *First*, While we live, it is God that keeps us alive; by his power he protects us from death, and by his bounty supplies us continually with the supports and comforts of life. He *holdeth our soul in life*. *Secondly*, The longer we live the more sensible we should be of God's goodness to us in keeping us alive, his care in prolonging our frail lives, his patience in prolonging our forfeited lives. Has he kept me alive these forty-five years? Is it about that time of life with us? Or is it more? Or is it less? We have reason to say, *It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed*. How much are we indebted to the favour of God, and what shall we render? Let the life thus kept by the providence of God be devoted to his praise. *Thirdly*, The death of many others round about us should make us the more thankful to God for sparing us and keeping us alive. Thousands falling on our right hand and our left and yet ourselves spared. These distinguishing favours impose on us strong obligations to singular obedience. [2.] That he was fit for business, now that he was in Canaan. Though eighty-five years old, yet as hearty and lively as when he was forty (v. 11): *As my strength was then, so is it now*. This was the fruit of the promise, and out-did what was said; for God not only gives what he promises, but he gives more:

life by promise shall be life, and health, and strength, and all that which will make the promised life a blessing and comfort. Moses had said in his prayer (Ps. 90:10) that at *eighty years old* even their *strength is labour and sorrow*, and so it is most commonly. But Caleb was an exception to the rule; his strength at eighty-five was ease and joy: this he got by *following the Lord fully*. Caleb here takes notice of this to the glory of God, and as an excuse for his asking a portion which he must fetch out of the giants' hands. Let not Joshua tell him he *knew not what he asked*; could he get the possession of that which he begged for a title to? "Yes," says he, "why not? I am as fit for war now as ever I was."

(3.) The promise Moses had made him in God's name that he should have *this mountain*, v. 9. This promise is his chief plea, and that on which he relies. As we find it (Num. 14:24) it is general, *him will I bring into the land whereunto he went, and his seed shall possess it*; but it seems it was more particular, and Joshua knew it; both sides understood this mountain for which Caleb was now a suitor to be intended. This was the place from which, more than any other, the spies took their report, for here they met with the sons of Anak (Num. 13:22), the sight of whom made such an impression upon them, v. 3. We may suppose that Caleb, observing what stress they laid upon the difficulty of conquering Hebron, a city garrisoned by the giants, and how thence they inferred that the conquest of the whole land was utterly impracticable, in opposition to their suggestions, and to convince the people that he spoke as he thought, bravely desired to have that city which they called *invincible* assigned to himself for his own portion: "I will undertake to deal with that, and, if I cannot get it for my inheritance, I will be without."

"Well," said Moses, "it shall be thy own then, win it and wear it." Such a noble heroic spirit Caleb had, and so desirous was he to inspire his brethren with it, that he chose this place only because it was the most difficult to be conquered. And, to show that his soul did not decay any more than his body, now forty-five years after he adheres to his choice and is still of the same mind.

(4.) The hopes he had of being master of it, though the sons of Anak were in possession of it (v. 12): *If the Lord will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out*. The city of Hebron Joshua had already reduced (ch. 10:37), but the mountain which belonged to it, and which was inhabited by the sons of Anak, was yet unconquered; for though the cutting off of the Anakim from Hebron was mentioned ch. 11:21, because the historian would relate all the military actions together, yet it seems it was not conquered till after they had begun to divide the land. Observe, He builds his hopes of driving out the sons of Anak upon the presence of God with him. He does not say, "Because I am now as strong for war as I was at forty, therefore I shall drive them out," depending upon his personal valour; nor does he depend upon his interest in the warlike tribe of Judah, who attended him now in making this address, and no doubt would assist him; nor does he court Joshua's aid, or put it upon that, "If thou wilt be with me I shall gain my point." But, *If the Lord will be with me*. Here, [1.] He seems to speak doubtfully of God's being with him, not from any distrust of his goodness or faithfulness. He had spoken without the least hesitation of God's presence with Israel in general (Num. 14:9); *the Lord is with us*. But for himself, from a humble sense of his own unworthiness of such a favour, he chooses to express himself thus, *If the Lord will be with me*. The Chaldee paraphrase reads it, *If the Word of the Lord be my helper*, that Word which is God, and in the fulness of time was made flesh, and is the captain of our salvation. [2.] But he expresses without the least doubt his assurance that if God were with him he should be able to dispossess the sons of Anak. "If God be with us, *If God be for us, who can be against us*, so as to prevail?" It is also intimated that if God

were not with him, though all the forces of Israel should come in to his assistance, he should not be able to gain his point. Whatever we undertake, God's favourable presence with us is all in all to our success; this therefore we must earnestly pray for, and carefully make sure of, by keeping ourselves in the love of God; and on this we must depend, and from this take our encouragement against the greatest difficulties.

3. Upon the whole matter, Caleb's request is (v. 12), *Give me this mountain*, (1.) Because it was formerly in God's promise, and he would let Israel know how much he valued the promise, insisting upon *this mountain, whereof the Lord spake in that day*, as most desirable, though perhaps as good a portion might have fallen to him by lot in common with the rest. Those that live by faith value that which is given by promise far above that which is given by providence only. (2.) Because it was now in the Anakim's possession, and he would let Israel know how little he feared the enemy, and would by his example animate them to push on their conquests. Herein Caleb answered his name, which signifies *all heart*.

II. Joshua grants his petition (v. 13): *Joshua blessed him*, commended his bravery, applauded his request, and gave him what he asked. He also prayed for him, and for his good success in his intended undertaking against the sons of Anak. Joshua was both a prince and a prophet, and upon both accounts it was proper for him to give Caleb his blessing, for *the less is blessed of the better*. Hebron was settled on Caleb and his heirs (v. 14), *because he wholly followed the Lord God of Israel*. And happy are we if we follow him. Note, Singular piety shall be crowned with singular favours. Now, 1. We are here told what Hebron had been, the city of Arba, a great man among the Anakim (v. 15); we find it called *Kirjath-arba* (Gen. 23:2), as the place where Sarah died. Hereabouts Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob lived most of their time in Canaan, and near to it was the cave of Machpelah, where they were buried, which perhaps had led Caleb hither when he went to spy out the land, and had made him covet this rather than any other part for his inheritance. 2. We are afterwards told what Hebron was. (1.) It was one of the cities belonging to priests (Jos. 21:13), and a *city of refuge*, Jos. 20:7. When Caleb had it, he contented himself with the country about it, and cheerfully gave the city to the priests, the Lord's ministers, thinking it could not be better bestowed, no, not upon his own children, nor that it was the less his own for being thus devoted to God. (2.) It was a royal city, and, in the beginning of David's reign, the metropolis of the kingdom of Judah; thither the people resorted to him, and there he reigned seven years. Thus highly was Caleb's city honoured; it is a pity there should have been such a blemish upon his family long after as Nabal was, who was *of the house of Caleb*, 1 Sa. 25:3. But the best men cannot entail their virtues.

Chapter 15

Though the land was not completely conquered, yet being (as was said in the close of the foregoing chapter) as rest from war for the present, and their armies all drawn out of the field to a general rendezvous at Gilgal, there they began to divide the land, though the work was afterwards perfected at Shiloh, ch. 18:1, etc. In this chapter we have the lot of the tribe of Judah, which in this, as in other things, had the precedency. I. The borders or bounds of the inheritance of Judah (v. 1–12). II. The particular assignment of Hebron and the country thereabout to Caleb and his family (v. 13–19). III. The names of the several cities that fell within Judah's lot (v. 20–63).

Verses 1-12

Judah and Joseph were the two sons of Jacob on whom Reuben's forfeited birth-right devolved. Judah had the dominion entailed on him, and Joseph the double portion, and therefore these two tribes were first seated, Judah in the southern part of the land of Canaan and Joseph in the northern part, and on them the other seven did attend, and had their respective lots as appurtenances to these two; the lots of Benjamin, Simeon, and Dan, were appendant to Judah, and those of Issachar and Zebulun, Naphtali and Asher, to Joseph. These two were first set up to be provided for, it should seem, before there was such an exact survey of the land as we find afterwards, ch. 18:9. It is probable that the most considerable parts of the northern and southern countries, and those that lay nearest to Gilgal, and which the people were best acquainted with, were first put into two portions, and the lot was cast upon them between these two principal tribes, of the one of which Joshua was, and of the other Caleb, who was the first commissioner in this writ of partition; and, by the decision of that lot, the southern country, of which we have an account in this chapter, fell to Judah, and the northern, of which we have an account in the two following chapters, to Joseph. And when this was done there was a more equal dividend (either in quantity or quality) of the remainder among the seven tribes. And this, probably, was intended in that general rule which was given concerning this partition (Num. 33:54), *to the more you shall give the more inheritance, and to the fewer you shall give the less, and every man's inheritance shall be where his lot falleth*; that is, "You shall appoint two greater portions which shall be determined by lot to those more numerous tribes of Judah and Joseph, and then the rest shall be less portions to be allotted to the less numerous tribes." The former was done in Gilgal, the latter in Shiloh.

In these verses, we have the borders of the lot of Judah, which, as the rest, is said to be *by their families*, that is, with an eye to the number of their families. And it intimates that Joshua and Eleazar, and the rest of the commissioners, when they had by lot given each tribe its portion, did afterwards (it is probable by lot likewise) subdivide those larger portions, and assign to each family its inheritance, and then to each household, which would be better done by this supreme authority, and be apt to give less disgust than if it had been left to the inferior magistrates of each tribe to make that distribution. The borders of this tribe are here largely fixed, yet not unalterably, for a good deal of that which lies within these bounds was afterwards assigned to the lots of Simeon and Dan. 1. The eastern border was all, and only, the Salt Sea, v. 5. Every sea is salt, but this was of an extraordinary and more than natural saltness, the effects of that fire and brimstone with which Sodom and Gomorrah were

destroyed in Abraham's time, whose ruins lie buried in the bottom of this dead water, which never either was moved itself or had any living thing in it. 2. The southern border was that of the land of Canaan in general, as will appear by comparing v. 1-4 with Num. 34:3-5. So that this powerful and warlike tribe of Judah guarded the frontiers of the whole land, on that side which lay towards their old sworn enemies (though their two fathers were twin-brethren), the Edomites. Our Lord therefore, who *sprang out of Judah*, and whose *the kingdom is, shall judge the mount of Esau*, Obad. 21. 3. The northern border divided it from the lot of Benjamin. In this, mention is made of *the stone of Bohan* a Reubenite (v. 6), who probably was a great commander of those forces of Reuben that came over Jordan, and died in the camp at Gilgal, and was buried not far off under this stone. The valley of Achor likewise lies upon this border (v. 7), to remind the men of Judah of the trouble which Achan, one of their tribe, gave to the congregation of Israel, that they might not be too much lifted up with their services. This northern line touched closely upon Jerusalem (v. 8), so closely as to include in the lot of this tribe Mount Zion and Mount Moriah, though the greater part of the city lay in the lot of Benjamin. 4. The west border went near to the great sea at first (v. 12), but afterwards the lot of the tribe of Dan took off a good part of Judah's lot on that side; for the lot was only to determine between Judah and Joseph, which should have the north and which the south, and not immovably to fix the border of either. Judah's inheritance had its boundaries determined. Though it was a powerful warlike tribe, and had a great interest in the other tribes, yet they must not therefore be left to their own choice, to enlarge their possessions at pleasure, but must live so as that their neighbours might live by them. Those that are placed high yet must not think to be *placed alone in the midst of the earth*.

Verses 13-19

The historian seems pleased with every occasion to make mention of Caleb and to do him honour, because he had honoured God in following him fully. Observe,

I. The grant Joshua made him of the mountain of Hebron for his inheritance is here repeated (v. 13), and it is said to be given him. 1. *According to the commandment of the Lord to Joshua*. Though Caleb, in his petition, had made out a very good title to it by promise, yet, because God had ordered Joshua to divide the land by lot, he would not in this one single instance, no, not to gratify his old friend Caleb, do otherwise, without orders from God, whose oracle, it is probable, he consulted upon this occasion. In every doubtful case it is very desirable to know the mind of God, and to see the way of our duty plain. 2. It is said to be a part *among the children of Judah*; though it was assigned him before the lot of that tribe came up, yet it proved, God so directing the lot, to be in the heart of that tribe, which was graciously ordered in kindness to him, that he might not be as one separated from his brethren and surrounded by those of other tribes.

II. Caleb having obtained this grant, we are told,

1. How he signalized his own valour in the conquest of Hebron (v. 14): *He drove thence the three sons of Anak*, he and those that he engaged to assist him in this service. This is mentioned here to show that the confidence he had expressed of success in this affair, through the presence of God with him (ch. 14:12), did not deceive him, but the event answered his expectation. It is not said that he *slew these giants*, but he *drove them thence*, which intimates that they retired upon his approach and fled before him; the strength and stature of their bodies could not keep up the courage of their minds, but with the countenances of lions

they had the hearts of trembling hares. Thus does God often *cut off the spirit of princes* (Ps. 76:12), *take away the heart of the chief of the people* (Job 12:24), and so shame the confidence of the proud; and thus if we resist the devil, that roaring lion, though he fall not, yet he will flee.

2. How he encouraged the valour of those about him in the conquest of Debir, v. 15, etc. It seems, though Joshua had once made himself master of Debir (ch. 10:39), yet the Canaanites had regained the possession in the absence of the army, so that the work had to be done a second time; and when Caleb had completed the reduction of Hebron, which was for himself and his own family, to show his zeal for the public good, as much as for his own private interest, he pushes on his conquest to Debir, and will not lay down his arms till he sees that city also effectually reduced, which lay but ten miles southward from Hebron, though he had not any particular concern in it, but the reducing of it would be to the general advantage of his tribe. Let us learn hence not to seek and mind our own things only, but to concern and engage ourselves for the welfare of the community we are members of; we are not born for ourselves, nor must we *live to ourselves*.

(1.) Notice is taken of the name of this city. It had been called *Kirjath-sepher, the city of a book*, and *Kirjath-sannah* (v. 49), which some translate *the city of learning* (so the Septuagint *Polis grammatoun*), whence some conjecture that it had been a university among the Canaanites, like Athens in Greece, in which their youth were educated; or perhaps the books of their chronicles or records, or the antiquities of the nation, were laid up there; and, it may be, this was it that made Caleb so desirous to see Israel master of this city, that they might get acquainted with the ancient learning of the Canaanites.

(2.) The proffer that Caleb made of his daughter, and a good portion with her, to any one that would undertake to reduce that city, and to command the forces that should be employed in that service, v. 16. Thus Saul promised a daughter to him that would kill Goliath (1 Sa. 17:25), neither of them intending to force his daughter to marry such as she could not love, but both of them presuming upon their daughters' obedience, and submission to their fathers' will, though it might be contrary to their own humour or inclination. Caleb's family was not long honourable and wealthy, but religious; he that himself *followed the Lord fully* no doubt taught his children to do so, and therefore it could not but be a desirable match to any young gentleman. Caleb, in making the proposal, aims, [1.] To do service to his country by the reducing of that important place; and, [2.] To marry a daughter well, to a man of learning, that would have a particular affection for *the city of books*, and a man of war, that would be likely to serve his country, and do worthily in his generation. Could he but marry his child to a man of such a character, he would think her well bestowed, whether the share in the lot of his tribe were more or less.

(3.) The place was bravely taken by Othniel, a nephew of Caleb, whom probably Caleb had thoughts of when he made the proffer, v. 17. This Othniel, who thus signalized himself when he was young, had long after, in his advanced years, the honour to be both a deliverer and a judge in Israel, the first single person that presided in their affairs after Joshua's death. It is good for those who are setting out in the world to begin betimes with that which is great and good, that, excelling in service when they are young, they may excel in honour when they grow old.

(4.) Hereupon (all parties being agreed) Othniel married his cousin-german Achsah, Caleb's daughter. It is probable that he had a kindness for her before, which put him upon this bold undertaking to obtain her. Love to his country, an ambition of honour,

and a desire to find favour with the princes of his people, might not have engaged him in this great action, but his affection for Achsah did. This made it intolerable to him to think that any one should do more to win her favour than he would, and so inspired him with this generous fire. Thus is love strong as death, and jealousy cruel as the grave.

(5.) Because the historian is now upon the dividing of the land, he gives us an account of Achsah's portion, which was in land, as more valuable because enjoyed by virtue of the divine promise, though we may suppose the conquerors of Canaan, who had had the spoil of so many rich cities, were full of money too. [1.] Some land she obtained by Caleb's free grant, which was allowed while she married within her own tribe and family, as Zelophehad's daughters did. He *gave her a south land*, v. 19. Land indeed, but *a south land*, dry, and apt to be parched. [2.] She obtained more upon her request; she would have had her husband to ask for a field, probably some particular field, or champaign ground, which belonged to Caleb's lot, and joined to that south land which he had settled upon his daughter at marriage. She thought her husband had the best interest in her father, who, no doubt, was extremely pleased with his late glorious achievement, but he thought it was more proper for her to ask, and she would be more likely to prevail; accordingly she did, submitting to her husband's judgment, though contrary to her own; and she managed the undertaking with great address. *First*, She took the opportunity when her father brought her home to the house of her husband, when the satisfaction of having disposed of his daughter so well would make him think nothing too much to do for her. *Secondly*, She *lighted off her ass*, in token of respect and reverence to her father, whom she would honour still, as much as before her marriage. She *cried* or *sighed* from off her ass, so the Septuagint and the vulgar Latin read it; she expressed some grief and concern, that she might give her father occasion to ask her what she wanted. *Thirdly*, She calls it *a blessing*, because it would add much to the comfort of her settlement; and she was sure that, since she married not only with her father's consent, but in obedience to his command, he would not deny her his blessing. *Fourthly*, She asks only for the *water*, without which the ground she had would be of little use either for tillage or pasture, but she means the field in which the springs of water were. The modesty and reasonableness of her quest gave it a great advantage. Earth without water would be like a tree without sap, or the body of an animal without blood; therefore, when God *gathered the waters into one place*, he wisely and graciously left some in every place, that the earth might be enriched for the service of man. See Ps. 104:10, etc. Well, Achsah gained her point; her father gave her what she asked, and perhaps more, for *he gave her the upper springs and the nether springs*, two fields so called from the springs that were in them, as we commonly distinguish between the higher field and the lower field. Those who understand it but of one field, watered both with the rain of heaven and the springs that issued out of the bowels of the earth, give countenance to the allusion we commonly make to this, when we pray for spiritual and heavenly blessings which relate to our souls as blessings of the upper springs, and those which relate to the body and the life that now is as blessings of the nether springs.

From this story we learn, 1. That it is no breach of the tenth commandment moderately to desire those comforts and conveniences of this life which we see attainable in a fair and regular way. 2. That husbands and wives should mutually advise, and jointly agree, about that which is for the common good of their family; and much more should they concur in asking of their heavenly Father the best blessings, those of the upper springs. 3. That parents must never think that lost which is

bestowed upon their children for their real advantage, but must be free in giving them portions as well as maintenance, especially when they are dutiful. Caleb had sons (1 Chr. 4:15), and yet gave thus liberally to his daughter. Those parents forget themselves and their relation who grudge their children what is convenient for them when they can conveniently part with it.

Verses 20-63

We have here a list of the several cities that fell within the lot of the tribe of Judah, which are mentioned by name, that they might know their own, and both keep it and keep to it, and might neither through cowardice nor sloth lose the possession of what was their own.

I. The cities are here named, and numbered in several classes, which they then could account for the reason of better than we can now. Here are, 1. Some that are said to be the uttermost cities *towards the coast of Edom*, v. 21–32. Here are thirty-eight named, and yet said to be *twenty-nine* (v. 32), because nine of these were afterwards transferred to the lot of Simeon, and are reckoned as belonging to that, as appears by comparing ch. 19:2, etc.; therefore those only are counted (though the rest are named) which remained to Judah. 2. Others that are said to be *in the valley* (v. 33) are counted to be fourteen, yet fifteen are named; but it is probable that Gederah and Gederathaim were either two names or two parts of one and the same city. 3. Then sixteen are named without any head of distinction, v. 37–41, and nine more, v. 42–44. 4. Then the three Philistine-cities, Ekron, Ashdod, and Gaza, v. 45–47. 5. Cities *in the mountains*, eleven in all (v. 48–51), nine more (v. 52–54), ten more (v. 55–57), six more (v. 58, 59), then two (v. 60), and six in the wilderness, a part of the country not so thick of inhabitants as some others were.

II. Now here, 1. We do not find Bethlehem, which was afterwards the city of David, and was ennobled by the birth of our Lord Jesus in it. But that city, which at the best was but *little among the thousands of Judah* (Mic. 5:2), except that it was thus dignified, was now so little as not to be accounted one of the cities, but perhaps was one of the villages not named. Christ came to give honour to the places he was related to, not to receive honour from them. 2. Jerusalem is said to continue in the hands of the Jebusites (v. 63), *for the children of Judah could not drive them out*, through their sluggishness, stupidity, and unbelief. Had they attempted it with vigour and resolution, we have reason to think God would not have been wanting to them to give them success; but they could not do it, because they would not. Jerusalem was afterwards to be the holy city, the royal city, the city of the great King, the brightest ornament of all the land of Israel. God has designed it should be so. It may therefore be justly looked upon as a punishment of their neglect to conquer other cities which God had given them that they were so long kept out of this. 3. Among the cities of Judah (in all 114) we meet with Libnah, which in Joram's days revolted, and probably set up for a free independent state (2 Ki. 8:22), and Lachish, where king Amaziah was slain (1 Ki. 14:19); it led the dance in idolatry (Mic. 1:13); it was the *beginning of sin to the daughter of Zion*. Giloh, Ahithophel's town, is here mentioned, and Tekoa, of which the prophet Amos was, and near which Jehoshaphat obtained that glorious victory, 2 Chr. 20:20, etc., and Maresha, where Asa was a conqueror. Many of the cities of this tribe occur in the history of David's troubles. Adullam, Ziph, Keilah, Maon, Engedi, Ziklag, here reckoned in this tribe, were places near which David had most of his haunts; for, though sometimes Saul drove him out from the inheritance of the Lord, yet he kept as close to it as he could. The wilderness of Judah

he frequented much, and in it John Baptist preached, and there the kingdom of heaven commenced, Mt. 3:1. The riches of this country no doubt answered Jacob's blessing of this tribe, that he should *wash his garments in wine*, Gen. 49:11. And, in general, *Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise*, not envy.

Chapter 16

It is a pity that this and the following chapter should be separated, for both of them give us the lot of the children of Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh, who, next to Judah, were to have the post of honour, and therefore had the first and best portion in the northern part of Canaan, as Judah now had in the southern part. In this chapter we have, I. A general account of the lot of these two tribes together (v. 1-4). II. The borders of the lot of Ephraim in particular (v. 5–10). That of Manasseh following in the next chapter.

Verses 1-4

Though Joseph was one of the younger sons of Jacob, yet he was his eldest by his most just and best beloved wife Rachel, was himself *his best beloved son*, and had been the greatest ornament and support of his family, kept it from perishing in a time of famine, and had been the *shepherd and stone of Israel*, and therefore his posterity were very much favoured by the lot. Their portion lay in the very heart of the land of Canaan. It extended from Jordan in the east (v. 1) to the sea, the Mediterranean Sea, in the west, so that it took up the whole breadth of Canaan from side to side; and no question the fruitfulness of the soil answered the blessings both of Jacob and Moses, Gen. 49:25, 26, and Deu. 33:13, etc. The portions allotted to Ephraim and Manasseh are not so particularly described as those of the other tribes; we have only the limits and boundaries of them, not the particular cities in them, as before we had the cities of Judah and afterwards those of the other tribes. For this no reason can be assigned, unless we may suppose that Joshua being himself of the children of Joseph they referred it to him alone to distribute among them the several cities that lay within their lot, and therefore did not bring in the names of their cities to the great council of their princes who sat upon this affair, by which means it came to pass that they were not inserted with the rest in the books.

Verses 5-10

Here, 1. The border of the lot of Ephraim is set down, by which it was divided on the south from Benjamin and Dan, who lay between it and Judah, and on the north from Manasseh; for east and west it reached from Jordan to the great sea. The learned, who aim to be exact in drawing the line according to the directions here, find themselves very much at a loss, the description being short and intricate. The report of those who in these latter ages have travelled those countries will not serve to clear the difficulties, so vastly unlike is it now to what it was then; not only cities have been so destroyed as that no mark nor footstep of them remains, but brooks are dried up, rivers alter their courses, and *even the mountain falling cometh to nought, and the rock is removed out of his place*, Job 14:18. Unless I could hope to solve the doubts that arise upon this draught of the border of Ephraim, it is to no purpose to mention them: no doubt it was then perfectly understood, so as that the first intention of recording it was effectually answered, which was to notify the ancient landmarks, which posterity must by no means remove. 2. Some separate cities are spoken of, that lay not within these borders, at least not if the line was drawn direct, but lay within the lot of Manasseh (v. 9), which might better be read, *and there were separate cities for the children of Ephraim among the inheritance of the children of Manasseh*, because it proved that Manasseh could spare them, and Ephraim had need of them,

and it might be hoped that no inconvenience would arise from this mixture of these two tribes together, who were both the sons of Joseph, and should *love as brethren*. And by this it appears that though, when the tribes were numbered in the plains of Moab, Manasseh had got the start of Ephraim in number, for Manasseh was then 52,000, and Ephraim but 32,000 (Num. 26:34, 37), yet by the time they were well settled in Canaan the hands were crossed again, and the blessing of Moses was verified, Deu. 33:17, *They are the ten thousands of Ephraim and they are the thousands of Manasseh*. Families and kingdoms are diminished and increased, increased and diminished again, as God pleases. 3. A brand is put upon the Ephraimites, that they did not drive out the Canaanites from Gezer (v. 10), either through carelessness or cowardice, either for want of faith in the promise of God, that he would give them success if they would make a vigorous effort, or for want of zeal for the command of God, which obliged them *utterly to drive out the Canaanites*, and to make no peace with them. And, though they hoped to satisfy the law by putting them under tribute, yet (as Calvin thinks) this made the matter worse, for it shows that they spared them out of covetousness, that they might be profited by their labours, and by dealing with them for their tribute they were in danger of being infected with their idolatry; yet some think that, when they brought them under tribute, they obliged them to renounce their idols, and to observe the seven precepts of the sons of Noah; and I should think so, but that we find in the sequel of the story that the Israelites were so far from restraining idolatry in others that they soon fell into it themselves. Many famous places were within this lot of the tribe of Ephraim, though not mentioned here. In it were Ramah, Samuel's city (called in the New Testament *Arimathea*, of which Joseph was, that took care of our Saviour's burial), and Shiloh, where the tabernacle was first set up. Tirzah also, the royal city of Jeroboam and his successors, and Deborah's palm-tree, under which she judged Israel, were in this tribe. Samaria, built by Omri after the burning of the royal palace of Tirzah, was in this tribe, and was long the royal city of the kingdom of the ten tribes; not far from it were Shechem, and the mountains Ebal and Gerizim, and Sychar, near which was Jacob's well, where Christ talked with the woman of Samaria. We read much of Mount Ephraim in the story of the Judges, and of a city called *Ephraim*, it is probable in this tribe, to which Christ retired, Jn. 11:54. The whole kingdom of the ten tribes is often, in the prophets, especially in Hosea, called *Ephraim*.

Chapter 17

The half tribe of Manasseh comes next to be provided for; and here we have, I. The families of that tribe that were to be portioned (v. 1-6). II. The country that fell to their lot (v. 7-13). III. The joint request of the two tribes that descended from Joseph, for the enlargement of their lot, and Joshua's answer to that request (v. 14-18).

Verses 1-6

Manasseh was itself but one half of the tribe of Joseph, and yet was divided and subdivided. 1. It was divided into two parts, one already settled on the other side Jordan, consisting of those who were the posterity of Machir, v. 1. This Machir was born to Manasseh in Egypt; there he had signalized himself as a man of war, probably in the contests between the Ephraimites and the men of Gath, 1 Chr. 7:21. His warlike disposition descended to his posterity, and therefore Moses gave them Gilead and Bashan, on the other side Jordan, of which before, ch. 13:31. It is here said that the lot came to Manasseh, *for he was the first-born of Joseph*. Bishop Patrick thinks it should be translated, *though he was the first-born of Joseph*, and then the meaning is plain, that the second lot was for Manasseh, because, though he was the first-born, yet Jacob had preferred Ephraim before him. See the names of those heads of the families that settled on the other side Jordan, 1 Chr. 5:24. 2. That part on this side Jordan as subdivided into ten families, v. 5. There were six sons of Gilead here named (v. 2), the same that are recorded Num. 26:30-32, only that he who is there called *Jezeer* is here called *Abiezer*. Five of these sons had each of them their portion; the sixth, which was Hopher, had his male line cut off in his son Zelophehad, who left daughters only, five in number, of whom we have often read, and these five had each of them a portion; though perhaps, they claiming under Hopher, all their five portions were but equal to one of the portions of the five sons. Or if Hopher had other sons besides Zelophehad, in whom the name of his family was kept up, their posterity married to the daughters of Zelophehad the elder brother, and in their right had these portions assigned them. See Num. 36:12. Here is, (1.) The claim which the daughters of Zelophehad made, grounded upon the command God gave to Moses concerning them, v. 4. They had themselves, when they were young, pleaded their own cause before Moses, and obtained the grant of an inheritance with their brethren, and now they would not lose the benefit of that grant for want of speaking to Joshua, but seasonably put in their demand themselves, as it should seem, and not their husbands for them. (2.) The assignment of their portions according to their claim. Joshua knew very well what God had ordered in their case, and did not object that they having not served in the wars of Canaan there was no reason why they should share in the possessions of Canaan, but readily *gave them as inheritance among the brethren of their father*. And now they reaped the benefit of their own pious zeal and prudent forecast in this matter. Thus those who take care in the wilderness of this world to make sure to themselves a place in the inheritance of the saints in light will certainly have the comfort of it in the other world, while those that neglect it now will lose it for ever.

Verses 7-13

We have here a short account of the lot of this half tribe. It reached from Jordan on the east to the great sea on the west; on the south it lay all along contiguous to Ephraim, but on the north it abutted upon Asher and Issachar. Asher lay north-west, and

Issachar north-east, which seems to be the meaning of that (v. 10), that they (that is, Manasseh and Ephraim, as related to it, both together making the tribe of Joseph) met in Asher on the north and Issachar on the east, for Ephraim itself reached not those tribes. Some things are particularly observed concerning this lot:-1. That there was great communication between this tribe and that of Ephraim. The city of Tappuah belonged to Ephraim, but the country adjoining to Manasseh (v. 8); there were likewise many cities of Ephraim that lay within the border of Manasseh (v. 9), of which before, ch. 16:9. 2. That Manasseh likewise had cities with their appurtenances in the tribes of Issachar and Asher (v. 11), God so ordering it, that though every tribe had its peculiar inheritance, which might not be alienated from it, yet they should thus intermix one with another, to keep up mutual acquaintance and correspondence among the tribes, and to give occasion for the doing of good offices one to another, as became those who, though of different tribes, were all one Israel, and were bound to love as brethren. 3. That they suffered the Canaanites to live among them, contrary to the command of God, serving their own ends by conniving at them, for they made them tributaries, v. 12, 13. The Ephraimites had done the same (ch. 16:10), and from them perhaps the Manassites learned it, and with their example excused themselves in it. The most remarkable person of this half tribe in after-time was Gideon, whose great actions were done within this lot. He was of the family of Abiezer; Cesarea was in this lot, and Antipatris, famed in the latter ages of the Jewish state.

Verses 14-18

Here, I. The children of Joseph quarrel with their lot; if they had had any just cause to quarrel with it, we have reason to think Joshua would have relieved them, by adding to it, or altering it, which it does not appear he did. It is probable, because Joshua was himself of the tribe of Ephraim, they promised themselves that they should have some particular favour shown them, and should not be confined to the decision of the lot so closely as the other tribes; but Joshua makes them know that in the discharge of his office, as a public person, he had no more regard to his own tribe than to any other, but would administer impartially, without favour or affection, wherein he has left an excellent example to all in public trusts. It was a very competent provision that was made for them, as much, for aught that appears, as they were able to manage, and yet they call it in disdain but *one lot*, as if that which was assigned to them both was scarcely sufficient for one. The word for *complainers* (Jude 16) is *mempsimoiroi*, blamers of their lot:-1. That they were very numerous, through the blessing of God upon them (v. 14): *I am a great people, for the Lord has blessed me*; and we have reason to hope that he that hath sent mouths will send meat. *"I am a great people, and in so small a lot shall not have room to thrive."* Yet observe, when they speak thankfully of their present increase, they do not speak confidently of the continuance of it. "The Lord has blessed me hitherto, however he may see fit to deal with me for the future." The uncertainty of what may be must not make us unthankful for what has been and is done in kindness to us. 2. That a good part of that country which had now fallen to their lot was in the hands of the Canaanites, and that they were formidable enemies, who brought into the field of battle *chariots of iron* (v. 16), that is, chariots with long scythes fastened to the sides of them, or the axle-tree, which made great destruction of all that came in their way, mowing them down like corn. They urge that though they had a good portion assigned them, yet it was in bad hands, and they could not come to the possession of it, wishing to have their lot in those countries that were more thoroughly reduced than this was.

II. Joshua endeavours to reconcile them to their lot. He owns they were a *great people*, and being two tribes ought to have more than *one lot only* (v. 17), but tells them that what had fallen to their share would be a sufficient lot for them both, if they would but work and fight. They desired a lot in which they might indulge themselves in ease and luxury. "No," says Joshua, "you must not count upon that; *in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread* is a sentence in force even in Canaan itself." He retorts their own argument, that they were a *great people*. "If so, you are the better able to help yourselves, and have the less reason to expect help from others. If thou hast many mouths to be filled, thou hast twice as many hands to be employed; earn, and then eat." 1. He bids them work for more (v. 15): "*Get thee up to the wood-country*, which is within thy own border, and let all hands be set to work to cut down the trees, rid the rough lands, and make them, with art and industry, good arable ground." Note, Many wish for larger possessions who do not cultivate and make the best of what they have, think they should have more talents given them who do not trade with those with which they are entrusted. Most people's poverty is the effect of their idleness; would they dig, they need not beg. 2. He bids them fight for more (v. 17, 18), when they pleaded that they could not come at the wood-lands he spoke of because in the valley between them and it were Canaanites whom they durst not enter the lists with. "Never fear them," said Joshua, "thou hast God on thy side, and *thou shalt drive out the Canaanites*, if thou wilt set about it in good earnest, *though they have iron chariots.*" We straiten ourselves by apprehending the difficulties in the way of our enlargement to be greater than really they are. What can be insuperable to faith and holy resolution?

Chapter 18

In this chapter we have, I. The setting up of the tabernacle at Shiloh (v. 1). II. The stirring up of the seven tribes that were yet unsettled to look after their lot, and the putting of them in a method for it, by Joshua (v. 2-7). III. The distributing of the land into seven lots, by certain men employed for that purpose (v. 8, 9). IV. The determining of these seven portions to the seven tribes yet unprovided for by lot (v. 10). V. The particular lot of the tribe of Benjamin, the borders of it (v. 11–20). And the cities contained in it (v. 21–28). The other six tribes we shall find well provided for in the next chapter.

Verse 1

In the midst of the story of the dividing of the land comes in this account of the setting up of the tabernacle, which had hitherto continued in its old place in the centre of their camp; but now that three of the four squadrons that used to surround it in the wilderness were broken and diminished, those of Judah, Ephraim, and Reuben, by the removal of those tribes to their respective possessions, and that of Dan only remained entire, it was time to think of removing the tabernacle itself into a city. Many a time the priests and Levites had taken it down, carried it, and set it up again in the wilderness, according to the directions given them (Num. 4:5, etc.); but now they must do it for good and all, not one of the stakes thereof must any more be removed, nor any of the cords thereof broken, Isa. 33:20. Observe,

I. The place to which the tabernacle was removed, and in which it was set up. It was *Shiloh*, a city in the lot of Ephraim, but lying close upon the lot of Benjamin. Doubtless God himself did some way or other direct them to this place, for he had promised to *choose the place* where he would make *his name to dwell*, Deu. 12:11. It is most probable God made known his mind in this matter by the judgment of Urim. This place was pitched upon, 1. Because it was in the heart of the country, nearer the centre than Jerusalem was, and therefore the more convenient for the meeting of all Israel there from the several parts of the country; it had been in the midst of their camp in the wilderness, and therefore must now be in the midst of their nation, as that which sanctified the whole, and was *the glory in the midst of them*. See Ps. 46:5. 2. Because it was in the lot of that tribe of which Joshua was, who was now their chief magistrate, and it would be both for his honour and convenience and for the advantage of the country to have it near him. The testimony of Israel and the thrones of judgment do well together, Ps. 122:4, 5. 3. Some think there was an eye to the name of the place, *Shiloh* being the name by which the Messiah was known in dying Jacob's prophecy (Gen. 49:10), which prophecy, no doubt, was well known among the Jews; the setting up of the tabernacle in Shiloh gave them a hint that in that Shiloh whom Jacob spoke of all the ordinances of this worldly sanctuary should have their accomplishment in a greater and more perfect tabernacle, Heb. 9:1, 11. And Dr. Lightfoot thinks that the place where the tabernacle was set up was therefore called *Shiloh*, because of the peaceableness of the land at this time; as afterwards in Salem was his temple, which also signifies *peaceable*.

II. The solemn manner of doing it: *The whole congregation assembled together* to attend the solemnity, to do honour to the ark of God, as the token of his presence, and to bid it welcome to its settlement. Every Israelite was interested in it, and therefore all testified their joy and satisfaction upon this occasion. See 2 Sa. 6:15. It is probable those tribes that were yet encamped

when the tabernacle was removed to Shiloh decamped from Gilgal and pitched about Shiloh, for every true Israelite will desire to fix where God's tabernacle fixed. Mention is made, on this occasion, of the land being subdued before them, to intimate that the country, hereabouts at least, being thoroughly reduced, they met with no opposition, nor were they apprehensive of any danger, but thought it time to make this grateful acknowledgment of God's goodness to them in the constant series of successes with which he had blessed them. It was a good presage of a comfortable settlement to themselves in Canaan, when their first care was to see the ark well settled as soon as they had a safe place ready to settle it in. Here the ark continued about 300 years, till the sins of Eli's house forfeited the ark, lost it and ruined Shiloh, and its ruins were long after made use of as warnings to Jerusalem. *Go, see what I did to Shiloh*, Jer. 7:12; Ps. 78:60.

Verses 2-10

Here, I. Joshua reproves those tribes which were yet unsettled that they did not bestir themselves to gain a settlement in the land which God had given them. Seven tribes were yet unprovided for, though sure of an inheritance, yet uncertain where it should be, and it seems in no great care about it, v. 2. And with them Joshua reasons (v. 3): *How long are you slack?* 1. They were too well pleased with their present condition, liked well enough to live in a body together, the more the merrier, and, like the Babel-builders, had no mind to be scattered abroad and break good company. The spoil of the cities they had taken served them to live plentifully upon for the present, and they banished the thoughts of time to come. Perhaps the tribes of Judah and Joseph, who had already received their inheritance in the countries next adjoining, were generous in entertaining their brethren who were yet unprovided for, so that they went from one good house to another among their friends, with which, instead of grudging that they were postponed, they were so well pleased that they cared not for going to houses of their own. 2. They were slothful and dilatory. It may be they wished the thing done, but had not spirit to stir in it, or move towards the doing of it, though it was so much for their own advantage; like the sluggard, that *hides his hand in his bosom, and it grieves him to bring it to his mouth again*. The countries that remained to be divided lay at a distance, and some parts of them in the hands of the Canaanites. If they go to take possession of them, the cities must be rebuilt or repaired, they must drive their flocks and herds a great way, and carry their wives and children to strange places, and this will not be done without care and pains, and breaking through some hardships; thus *he that observes the wind shall not sow, and he that regards the clouds shall not reap*, Eccl. 11:4. Note, Many are diverted from real duties, and debarred from real comforts, by seeming difficulties. God by his grace has given us a title to a good land, the heavenly Canaan, but we are *slack to take possession*; we enter not into that rest, as we might by faith, and hope, and holy joy; we live not in heaven, as we might by setting our affections on things above and having our conversation there. How long shall it be thus with us? How long shall we thus stand in our own light, and *forsake our own mercies* for lying vanities? Joshua was sensible of the inconveniences of this delay, that, while they neglected to take possession of the land that was conquered, the Canaanites were recovering strength and spirit, and fortifying themselves in the places that were yet in their hands, which would make the total expulsion of them the more difficult. They would lose their advantages by not following their blow; and therefore, *as an eagle stirreth up her nest*, so Joshua stirs them up to take possession of their lot. He is ready to do his part, if they will but do theirs.

II. He puts them in a way to settle themselves.

1. The land that remained must be surveyed, an account taken of the cities, and the territories belonging to them, v. 4. These must be divided into seven equal parts, as near as they could guess at their true value, which they must have an eye to, and not merely to the number of the cities and extent of the country. Judah is fixed on the south and Joseph on the north of Shiloh, to protect the tabernacle (v. 5), and therefore they need not describe their country, but those countries only that were yet undisposed of. He gives a reason (v. 7) why they must divide it into seven parts only, because the Levites were to have no temporal estate (as we say), but their benefices only, which were entailed upon their families: *The priesthood of the Lord is their inheritance*, and a very honourable, comfortable, plentiful inheritance it was. Gad and Reuben, with half of the tribe of Manasseh, were already fixed, and needed not to have any further care taken of them. Now, (1.) The surveyors were three men out of each of the seven tribes that were to be provided for (v. 4), one-and-twenty in all, who perhaps for greater expedition, because they had already lost time, divided themselves into three companies, one of each tribe in each company, and took each their district to survey. The matter was thus referred equally, that there might be neither any partiality used in making up the seven lots, nor any shadow of suspicion given, but all might be satisfied that they had right done them. (2.) The survey was accordingly made, and brought in to Joshua, v. 8, 9. Josephus says it was seven months in the doing. And we must in it observe, [1.] The faith and courage of the persons employed: abundance of Canaanites remained in the land, and all raging against Israel, *as a bear robbed of her whelps*; the business of these surveyors would soon be known, and what could they expect but to be way-laid, and have their brains knocked out by the fierce observers? But in obedience to Joshua's command, and in dependence upon God's power, they thus put their lives in their hands to serve their country. [2.] The good providence of God in protecting them from the many deaths they were exposed to, and bringing them all safely again to the host at Shiloh. When we are in the way of our duty we are under the special protection of the Almighty.

2. When it was surveyed, and reduced to seven lots, then Joshua would, by appeal to God, and direction from him, determine which of these lots should belong to each tribe (v. 6): *That I may cast lots for you here* at the tabernacle (because it was a sacred transaction) *before the Lord our God*, to whom each tribe must have an eye, with thankfulness for the conveniences and submission to the inconveniences of their allotment. What we have in the world we must acknowledge God's property in, and dispose of it as before him, with justice, and charity, and dependence upon Providence. The heavenly Canaan is described to us in a book, the book of the scriptures, and there are in it mansions and portions sufficient for all God's spiritual Israel. Christ is our Joshua that divides it to us. On him we must attend, and to him we must apply for an inheritance with the saints in light. See Jn. 17:2, 3.

Verses 11-28

We have here the lot of the tribe of Benjamin, which Providence cast next to Joseph on the one hand, because Benjamin was own and only brother to Joseph, and was little Benjamin (Ps. 68:27), that needed the protection of great Joseph, and yet had a better protector, for *the Lord shall cover him all the day long*, Deu. 33:12. And it was next to Judah on the other hand, that this tribe might hereafter unite with Judah in an adherence to the throne of David and the temple at Jerusalem. Here we have, 1.

The exact borders and limits of this tribe, which we need not be exact in the explication of. As it had Judah on the south and Joseph on the north, so it had Jordan on the east and Dan on the west. The western border is said to *compass the corner of the sea southward* (v. 14), whereas no part of the lot of this tribe came near to the great sea. Bishop Patrick thinks the meaning is that it ran along in a parallel line to the great sea, though at a distance. Dr. Fuller suggests that since it is not called *the great sea*, but only *the sea*, which often signifies any lake or mere, it may be meant of the pool of Gibeon, which may be called a *corner* or *canton* of the sea; it is called the *great waters of Gibeon* (Jer. 41:12), and it is compassed by the western border of this tribe. 2. The particular cities in this tribe, not all, but the most considerable. Twenty-six are here named. Jericho is put first, though dismantled, and forbidden to be rebuilt as a city with gates and walls, because it might be built and inhabited as a country village, and so was not useless to this tribe. Gilgal, where Israel first encamped when Saul was made king (1 Sa. 11:15), was in this tribe. It was afterwards a very profane place. Hos. 9:15, *All their wickedness is in Gilgal*. Beth-el was in this tribe, a famous place. Though Benjamin adhered to the house of David, yet Beth-el, it seems, was in the possession of the house of Joseph (Jdg. 1:23–25), and there Jeroboam set up one of his calves. In this tribe was Gibeon, where the altar was in the beginning of Solomon's time, 2 Chr. 1:3. Gibeah likewise, that infamous place where the Levite's concubine was abused. Mizpeh, and near it Samuel's Ebenezer, and also Anathoth, Jeremiah's city, were in this tribe, as was the northern part of Jerusalem. Paul was the honour of this tribe (Rom. 11:1; Phil. 3:5); but where his land lay we know not: he sought the better country.

Chapter 19

In the description of the lots of Judah and Benjamin we have an account both of the borders that surrounded them and of the cities contained in them. In that of Ephraim and Manasseh we have the borders, but not the cities; in this chapter Simeon and Dan are described by their cities only, and not their borders, because they lay very much within Judah, especially the former; the rest have both their borders described and their cities names, especially frontiers. Here is, I. The lot of Simeon (v. 1-9). II. Of Zebulun (v. 10-16). III. Of Issachar (v. 17-23). IV. Of Asher (v. 24-31). V. Of Naphtali (v. 32-39). VI. Of Dan (v. 40-48). Lastly, The inheritance assigned to Joshua himself and his own family (v. 49-51).

Verses 1-9

Simeon's lot was drawn after Judah's, Joseph's, and Benjamin's, because Jacob had put that tribe under disgrace; yet it is put before the two younger sons of Leah and the three sons of the handmaids. Not one person of note, neither judge nor prophet, was of this tribe, that we know of.

I. The situation of their lot was within that of Judah (v. 1) and was taken from it, v. 9. It seems, those that first surveyed the land thought it larger than it was, and that it would have held out to give every tribe in proportion as large a share as they had carved out for Judah; but, upon a more strict enquiry, it was found that it would not reach (v. 9): *The part of the children of Judah was too much for them*, more than they needed, and more, as it proved, than fell to their share. Yet God did not by the lot lessen it, but left it to their prudence and care afterwards to discover and rectify the mistake, which when they did, 1. The men of Judah did not oppose the taking away of the cities again, which by the first distribution fell within their border, when they were convinced that they had more than their proportion. In all such cases errors must be excepted and a review admitted if there be occasion. Though, in strictness, what fell to their lot was their right against all the world, yet they would not insist upon it when it appeared that another tribe would want what they had to spare. Note, We must look on the things of others, and not on our own only. The abundance of some must supply the wants of others, that there may be somewhat of an equality, for which there may be equity where there is not law. 2. That which was thus taken off from Judah to be put into a new lot Providence directed to the tribe of Simeon, that Jacob's prophecy concerning this tribe might be fulfilled, *I will divide them in Jacob*. The cities of Simeon were scattered in Judah, with which tribe they were surrounded, except on that side towards the sea. This brought them into a confederacy with the tribe of Judah (Jdg. 1:3), and afterwards was a happy occasion of the adherence of many of this tribe to the house of David, at the time of the revolt of the ten tribes to Jeroboam. 2 Chr. 15:9, *out of Simeon they fell to Asa in abundance*. It is good being in a good neighbourhood.

II. The cities within their lot are here named. Beersheba, or Sheba, for these names seem to refer to the same place, is put first. Ziklag, which we read of in David's story, is one of them. What course they took to enlarge their borders and make room for themselves we find 1 Chr. 4:39, etc.

Verses 10-16

This is the lot of Zebulun, who, though born of Leah after Issachar, yet was blessed by Jacob and Moses before him; and

therefore it was so ordered that his lot was drawn before that of Issachar, north of which it lay and south of Asher. 1. The lot of this tribe was washed by the great sea on the west, and by the sea of Tiberias on the east, answering Jacob's prophecy (Gen. 49:13), *Zebulun shall be a haven of ships*, trading ships on the great sea and fishing ships on the sea of Galilee. 2. Though there were some places in this tribe which were made famous in the Old Testament, especially *Mount Carmel*, on which the famous trial was between God and Baal in Elijah's time, yet it was made much more illustrious in the New Testament; for within the lot of this tribe was Nazareth, where our blessed Saviour spent so much of his time on earth, and from which he was called *Jesus of Nazareth*, and *Mount Tabor* on which he was transfigured, and that coast of the sea of Galilee on which Christ preached so many sermons and wrought so many miracles.

Verses 17-23

The lot of Issachar ran from Jordan in the east to the great sea in the west, Manasseh on the south, and Zebulun on the north. A numerous tribe, Num. 26:25. Tola, one of the judges, was of this tribe, Jdg. 10:1. So was Baasha, one of the kings of Israel, 1 Ki. 15:27. The most considerable places in this tribe were, 1. Jezreel, in which was Ahab's palace, and near it Naboth's vineyard. 2. Shunem, where lived that good Shunamite that entertained Elisha. 3. The river Kishon, on the banks of which, in this tribe, Sisera was beaten by Deborah and Barak. 4. The mountains of Gilboa, on which Saul and Jonathan were slain, which were not far from Endor, where Saul consulted the witch. 5. The valley of Megiddo, where Josiah was slain near Hadad-rimmon, 2 Ki. 23:29; Zec. 12:11.

Verses 24-31

The lot of Asher lay upon the coast of the great sea. We read not of any famous person of this tribe but Anna the prophetess, who was a constant resident in the temple at the time of our Saviour's birth, Lu. 2:36. Nor were there many famous places in this tribe. Aphek (mentioned v. 30) was the place near which Benhadad was beaten by Ahab, 1 Ki. 20:30. But close adjoining to this tribe were the celebrated sea-port towns of Tyre and Sidon, which we read so much of. Tyre is called here *that strong city* (v. 29), but Bishop Patrick thinks it was not the same Tyre that we read of afterwards, for that was built on an island; this old strong city was on the continent. And it is conjectured by some that into these two strong-holds, Sidon and Tzor, or Tyre, many of the people of Canaan fled and took shelter when Joshua invaded them.

Verses 32-39

Naphtali lay furthest north of all the tribes, bordering on Mount Libanus. The city of Leshem, or Liash, lay on the utmost edge of it to the north, and therefore when the Danites had made themselves masters of it, and called it *Dan*, the length of Canaan from north to south was reckoned from Dan to Beersheba. It had Zebulun on the south, Asher on the west, and Judah upon Jordan, probably a city of that name, and so distinguished from the tribe of Judah on the east. It was in the lot of this tribe, near the waters of Merom, that Joshua fought and routed Jabin, ch. 11:1. etc. In this tribe stood Capernaum and Bethsaida, on the north end of the sea of Tiberias, in which Christ did so many mighty works; and the mountain (as is supposed) on which Christ preached, Mt. 5:1.

Verses 40-48

Dan, though commander of one of the four squadrons of the camp of Israel, in the wilderness, that which brought up the rear, yet was last provided for in Canaan, and his lot fell in the southern part of Canaan, between Judah on the east and the land of the Philistines on the west, Ephraim on the north and Simeon on the south. Providence ordered this numerous and powerful tribe into a post of danger, as best able to deal with those vexatious neighbours the Philistines, and so it was found in Samson. Here is an account, 1. Of what fell to this tribe by lot, Zorah, and Eshtaol, and the camp of Dan thereabouts, of which we read in the story of Samson. And near there was the valley of Eshcol, whence the spies brought the famous bunch of grapes. Japho, or Joppa was in this lot. 2. Of what they got by their own industry and valour, which is mentioned here (v. 47), but related at large, Jdg. 18:7, etc.

Verses 49-51

Before this account of the dividing of the land is solemnly closed up, in the last verse, which intimates that the thing was done to the satisfaction of all, here is an account of the particular inheritance assigned to Joshua. 1. He was last served, though the eldest and greatest man of all Israel, and who, having commanded in the conquest of Canaan, might have demanded the first settlement in it for himself and his family. But he would make it to appear that in all he did he sought the good of his country, and not any private interest of his own. He was content to be unfixed till he saw them all settled; and herein is a great example to all in public places to prefer the common welfare before their particular satisfaction. Let the public be first served. 2. He had his lot *according to the word of the Lord*. It is probable that, when God by Moses told Caleb what inheritance he should have (ch. 14:9), he gave the like promise to Joshua, which he had an eye to in making his election: this made his portion doubly pleasant, that he had it, not as the rest by common providence, but by special promise. 3. He chose it in Mount Ephraim, which belonged to his own tribe, with which he thereby put himself in common, when he might by prerogative have chosen his inheritance in some other tribe, as suppose that of Judah, and thereby have distinguished himself from them. Let no man's preferment or honour make him ashamed of his family or country, or estrange him from it. The tabernacle was set up in the lot of Ephraim, and Joshua would forecast not to be far from that. 4. The *children of Israel* are said to *give it to him* (v. 49), which bespeaks his humility, that he would not take it to himself without the people's consent and approbation, as if he would thereby own himself, though *major singulis—greater than any one, yet minor universis—less than the whole assemblage*, and would hold even the estate of his family, under God, by the grant of the people. 5. It was a city that must be built before it was fit to be dwelt in. While others dwelt in houses which they built not, Joshua must erect for himself (that he might be a pattern of industry and contentment with mean things) such buildings as he could hastily run up, without curiosity or magnificence. Our Lord Jesus thus came and dwelt among us, not in pomp but poverty, providing rest for us, yet himself not having where to lay his head. *Even Christ pleased not himself.*

Chapter 20

This short chapter is concerning the cities of refuge, which we often read of in the writings of Moses, but this is the last time that we find mention of them, for now that matter was thoroughly settled. Here is, I. The law God gave concerning them (v. 1-6). II. The people's designation of the particular cities for that use (v. 7-9). And this remedial law was a figure of good things to come.

Verses 1-6

Many things were by the law of Moses ordered to be done when they came to Canaan and this among the rest, the appointing of sanctuaries for the protecting of those that were guilty of casual murder, which was a privilege to all Israel, since no man could be sure but some time or other it might be his own case; and it was for the interest of the land that the blood of an innocent person, whose hand only was guilty but not his heart, should not be shed, no, not by the avenger of blood: of this law, which was so much for their advantage, God here reminds them, that they might remind themselves of the other laws he had given them, which concerned his honour. 1. Orders are given for the appointing of these cities (v. 2), and very seasonably at this time when the land was newly surveyed, and so they were the better able to divide the coasts of it into three parts, as God had directed them, in order to the more convenient situation of these cities of refuge, Deu. 19:3. Yet it is probable that it was not done till after the Levites had their portion assigned them in the next chapter, because the cities of refuge were all to be Levites' cities. As soon as ever God had given them cities of rest, he bade them appoint cities of refuge, to which none of them knew but they might be glad to escape. Thus God provided, not only for their ease at all times, but for their safety in times of danger, and such times we must expect and prepare for in this world. And it intimates what God's spiritual Israel have and shall have, in Christ and heaven, not only rest to repose themselves in, but refuge to secure themselves in. And we cannot think these cities of refuge would have been so often and so much spoken of in the law of Moses, and have had so much care taken about them (when the intention of them might have been effectually answered, as it is in our law, by authorizing the courts of judgment to protect and acquit the manslayer in all those cases wherein he was to have privilege of sanctuary), if they were not designed to typify the relief which the gospel provides for poor penitent sinners, and their protection from the curse of the law and the wrath of God, in our Lord Jesus, to whom believers flee for refuge (Heb. 6:18), and in whom they are found (Phil. 3:9) as in a sanctuary, where they are privileged from arrests, and *there is now no condemnation to them*, Rom. 8:1. 2. Instructions are given for the using of these cities. The laws in this matter we had before, Num. 35:10, etc., where they were opened at large. (1.) It is supposed that a man might possibly kill a person, it might be his own child or dearest friend, unawares and unwittingly (v. 3), not only whom he hated not, but whom he truly loved beforetime (v. 5); for *the way of man is not in himself*. What reason have we to thank God who has kept us both from slaying and from being slain by accident! In this case, it is supposed that the relations of the person slain would demand the life of the slayer, as a satisfaction to that ancient law that *whoso sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed*. (2.) It is provided that if upon trial it appeared that the murder was done purely by accident, and not by design, either upon an old grudge or a sudden passion, then the slayer should be sheltered

from the avenger of blood in any one of these cities, v. 4-6. By this law he was entitled to a dwelling in that city, was taken into the care of the government of it, but was confined to it, as prisoner at large; only, if he survived the high priest, then, and not till then, he might return to his own city. And the Jews say, "If he died before the high priest in the city of his refuge and exile, and was buried there, yet, at the death of the high priest, his bones should be removed with respect to the place of his fathers' sepulchres."

Verses 7-9

We have here the nomination of the cities of refuge in the land of Canaan, which was made by the advice and authority of Joshua and the princes (v. 7); and upon occasion of the mention of this is repeated the nomination of the other three in the lot of the other two tribes and a half, which was made by Moses (Deu. 4:43), but (as bishop Patrick thinks) they had not the privilege till now. 1. They are said to *sanctify* these cities, that is the original word for *appointed*, v. 7. Not that any ceremony was used to signify the consecration of them, only they did by a public act of court solemnly declare them cities of refuge, and as such sacred to the honour of God, as the protector of exposed innocency. If they were sanctuaries, it was proper to say they were *sanctified*. Christ, our refuge, was sanctified by his Father; nay, for our sakes he sanctified himself, Jn. 17:19. 2. These cities (as those also on the other side Jordan) stood in the three several parts of the country, so conveniently that a man might (they say) in half a day reach some one of them from any corner of the country. Kedesh was in Naphtali, the most northern tribe, Hebron in Judah, the most southern, and Shechem in Ephraim, which lay in the middle, about equally distant from the other two. God is a refuge at hand. 3. They were all Levites' cities, which put an honour upon God's tribe, making them judges in those cases wherein divine Providence was so nearly concerned, and protectors to oppressed innocency. It was also a kindness to the poor refugee, that when he might not go up to the house of the Lord, nor tread his courts, yet he had the servants of God's house with him, to instruct him, and pray for him, and help to make up the want of public ordinances. If he must be confined, it shall be to a Levite-city, where he may, if he will, improve his time. 4. These cities were upon hills to be seen afar off, for a city on a hill cannot be hid; and this would both direct and encourage the poor distressed man that was making that way; and, though therefore his way at last was up-hill, yet this would comfort him, that he would be in his place of safety quickly, and if he could but get into the suburbs of the city he was well enough off. 5. Some observe a significancy in the names of these cities with application to Christ our refuge. I delight not in quibbling upon names, yet am willing to take notice of these. *Kedesh* signifies *holy*, and our refuge is the holy Jesus. *Shechem*, *a shoulder*, and the government is upon his shoulder. *Hebron*, *fellowship*, and believers are called into the fellowship of Christ Jesus our Lord. *Bezer*, *a fortification*, for he is a strong-hold to all those that trust in him. *Ramoth*, *high* or *exalted*, for him hath God exalted with his own right hand. *Golan*, *joy* or *exultation*, for in him all the saints are justified, and shall glory. *Lastly*, Besides all these, the horns of the altar, wherever it was, were a refuge to those who took hold of them, if the crime were such as that sanctuary allowed. This is implied in that law (Ex. 21:14), that a wilful murderer shall be taken from God's altar to be put to death. And we find the altar used for this purpose. 1 Ki. 1:50; 2:28. Christ is our altar, who not only *sanctifies the gift*, but protects the giver.

Chapter 21

It had been often said that the tribe of Levi should have "no inheritance with their brethren," no particular part of the country assigned them, as the other tribes had, no, not the country about Shiloh, which one might have expected to be appropriated to them as the lands of the church; but, though they were not thus cast into a country by themselves, it appears, by the provision made for them in this chapter, that they were no losers, but the rest of the tribes were very much gainers, by their being dispersed. We have here, I. The motion they made to have their cities assigned them, according to God's appointment (v. 1, 2). II. The nomination of the cities accordingly out of the several tribes, and the distribution of them to the respective families of this tribe (v. 3-8). III. A catalogue of the cities, forty-eight in all (v. 9-42). IV. A receipt entered in full of all that God had promised to his people Israel (v. 43-45).

Verses 1-8

Here is, I. The Levites' petition presented to this general convention of the states, now sitting at Shiloh, v. 1, 2. Observe, 1. They had not their lot assigned them till they made their claim. There is an inheritance provided for all the saints, that royal priesthood, but then they must petition for it. *Ask, and it shall be given you.* Joshua had quickened the rest of the tribes who were slack to put in their claims, but the Levites, it may be supposed, knew their duty and interest better than the rest, and were therefore forward in this matter, when it came to their turn, without being called upon. They build their claim upon a very good foundation, not their own merits nor services, but the divine precept: "*The Lord commanded by the hand of Moses to give us cities, commanded you to grant them, which implied a command to us to ask them.*" Note, The maintenance of ministers is not an arbitrary thing, left purely to the good-will of the people, who may let them starve if they please; no, as the God of Israel commanded that the Levites should be well provided for, so has the Lord Jesus, the King of the Christian church, ordained, and a perpetual ordinance it is that *those who preach the gospel should live of the gospel* (1 Co. 9:14), and should live comfortably. 2. They did not make their claim till all the rest of the tribes were provided for, and then they did it immediately. There was some reason for it; every tribe must first know their own, else they would not know what they gave the Levites, and so it could not be such a reasonable service as it ought to be. But it is also an instance of their humility, modesty, and patience (and Levites should be examples of these and other virtues), that they were willing to be served last, and they fared never the worse for it. Let not God's ministers complain if at any time they find themselves postponed in men's thoughts and cares, but let them make sure of the favour of God and the honour that comes from him, and then they may well enough afford to bear the slights and neglects of men.

II. The Levites' petition granted immediately, without any dispute, the princes of Israel being perhaps ashamed that they needed to be called upon in this matter, and that the motion had not been made among themselves for the settling of the Levites. 1. The children of Israel are said to give the cities for the Levites. God had appointed how many they should be in all, forty-eight. It is probable that Joshua and the princes, upon consideration of the extent and value of the lot of each tribe as it was laid before them, had appointed how many cities should be taken out of each; and then the fathers of the several tribes

themselves agreed which they should be, and therefore are said to give them, as an offering, to the Lord; so God had appointed. Num. 35:8, *Every one shall give of his cities to the Levites*. Here God tried their generosity, and it was found to praise and honour, for it appears by the following catalogue that the cities they gave to the Levites were generally some of the best and most considerable in each tribe. And it is probable that they had an eye to the situation of them, taking care they should be so dispersed as that no part of the country should be too far distant from a Levites' city. 2. They gave them *at the commandment of the Lord*, that is, with an eye to the command and in obedience to it, which was it that sanctified the grant. They gave the number that God commanded, and it was well this matter was settled that the Levites might not ask more nor the Israelites offer less. They gave them also with their suburbs, or glebe-lands, belonging to them, so many cubits by measure from the walls of the city, as God had commanded (Num. 35:4, 5), and did not go about to cut them short. 3. When the forty-eight cities were pitched upon, they were divided into four lots, as they lay next together, and then by lot were determined to the four several families of the tribe of Levi. When the Israelites had surrendered the cities into the hand of God, he would himself have the distributing of them among his servants. (1.) The family of Aaron, who were the only priests, had for their share the thirteen cities that were given by the tribes of Judah, Simeon, and Benjamin, v. 4. God in wisdom ordered it thus, that though Jerusalem itself was not one of their cities, it being as yet in the possession of the Jebusites (and those generous tribes would not mock the Levites, who had another warfare to mind, with a city that must be recovered by the sword before it could be enjoyed), yet the cities that fell to their lot were those which lay next to Jerusalem, because that was to be, in process of time, the holy city, where their business would chiefly lie. (2.) The Kohathite-Levites (among whom were the posterity of Moses, though never distinguished from them) had the cities that lay in the lot of Dan, which lay next to Judah, and in that of Ephraim, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, which lay next to Benjamin. So those who descended from Aaron's father joined nearest to Aaron's sons. (3.) Gershon was the eldest son of Levi, and therefore, though the younger house of the Kohathites was preferred before his, yet his children had the precedency of the other family of Merari, v. 6. (4.) The Merarites, the youngest house, had their lot last, and it lay furthest off, v. 7. The rest of the sons of Jacob had a lot for every tribe only, but Levi, God's tribe, had a lot for each of its families; for there is a particular providence directing and attending the removals and settlements of ministers, and appointing where those shall fix who are to be the lights of the world.

Verses 9-42

We have here a particular account of the cities which were given to the children of Levi out of the several tribes, not only to be occupied and inhabited by them, as tenants to the several tribes in which they lay—no, their interest in them was not dependent and precarious, but to be owned and possessed by them as lords and proprietors, and as having the same title to them that the rest of the tribes had to their cities or lands, as appears by the law which preserved the house in the Levites' cities from being alienated any longer than till the year of jubilee, Lev. 25:32, 33. Yet it is probable that the Levites having only the cities and suburbs, while the land about pertained to the tribes in which they lay, those of that tribe, for the convenience of occupying that land, might commonly rent houses of the Levites, as they could spare them in their cities, and so live among them as their tenants. Several things may be observed in this account, besides what was observed in the law concerning it, Num. 35.

I. That the Levites were dispersed into all the tribes, and not suffered to live all together in any one part of the country. This would find them all with work, and employ them all for the good of others; for ministers, of all people, must neither be idle nor live to themselves or to one another only. Christ left his twelve disciples together in a body, but left orders that they should in due time disperse themselves, that they might *preach the gospel to every creature*. The mixing of the Levites thus with the other tribes would be an obligation upon them to walk circumspectly, and as became their sacred function, and to avoid every thing that might disgrace it. Had they lived all together, they would have been tempted to wink at one another's faults, and to excuse one another when they did amiss; but by this means they were made to see the eyes of all Israel upon them, and therefore saw it their concern to walk so as that their ministry might in nothing be blamed nor their high character suffer by their ill carriage.

II. That every tribe of Israel was adorned and enriched with its share of Levites' cities in proportion to its compass, even those that lay most remote. They were all God's people, and therefore they all had Levites among them. 1. To show kindness to, as God appointed them, Deu. 12:19; 14:29. They were God's receivers, to whom the people might give their grateful acknowledgments of God's goodness, as the occasion and disposition were. 2. To receive advice and instruction from; when they could not go up to the tabernacle, to consult those who attended there, they might go to a Levites' city, and be taught the good knowledge of the Lord. Thus God set up a candle in every room of his house, to give light to all his family; as those that attended the altar *kept the charge of the Lord*, to see that no divine appointment was neglected there, so those that were scattered in the country had their charge too, which was to see that no idolatrous superstitious usages were introduced at a distance and to watch for the souls of God's Israel. Thus did God graciously provide for the keeping up of religion among them, and that they might have the word nigh them; yet, blessed be God, we, under the gospel, have it yet nigher, not only Levites in every county, but Levites in every parish, whose office it is still to teach the people knowledge, and to go before them in the things of God.

III. That there were thirteen cities, and those some of the best, appointed for the priests, the sons of Aaron, v. 19. Aaron left but two sons, Eleazar and Ithamar, yet his family was now so much increased, and it was foreseen that it would in process of time grow so numerous, as to replenish all these cities, though a considerable number must of necessity be resident wherever the ark and the altar were. We read in both Testaments of such numbers of priests that we may suppose none of all the families of Israel that came out of Egypt increased afterwards so much as that of Aaron did; and the promise afterwards to the house of Aaron is, *God shall increase you more and more, you and your children*, Ps. 115:12, 14. He will raise up a *seed to serve him*.

IV. That some of the Levites' cities were afterwards famous upon other accounts. Hebron was the city in which David began his reign, and in Manhanaim, another Levites' city (v. 38), he lay, and had his headquarters when he fled from Absalom. The first Israelite that ever wore the title of king (namely, Abimelech, the son of Gideon) reigned in Shechem, another Levites' city, v. 21.

V. That the number of them in all was more than of most of the tribes, except Judah, though the tribe of Levi was one of the least of the tribes, to show how liberal God is, and his people should be, to his ministers; yet the disproportion will not appear

so great as at first it seems, if we consider that the Levites had cities only with their suburbs to dwell in, but the rest of the tribes, besides their cities (and those perhaps were many more than are named in the account of their lot), had many unwall'd towns and villages which they inhabited, besides country houses.

Upon the whole, it appears that effectual care was taken that the Levites should live both comfortably and usefully: and those, whether ministers or others, for whom Providence has done well, must look upon themselves as oblig'd thereby to do good, and, according as their capacity and opportunity are, to serve their generation.

Verses 43-45

We have here the conclusion of this whole matter, the foregoing history summed up, and, to make it appear the more bright, compared with the promise of which it was the full accomplishment. God's word and his works mutually illustrate each other. The performance makes the promise appear very true and the promise makes the performance appear very kind.

I. God had promised to give the seed of Abraham the land of Canaan for a possession, and now at last he performed this promise (v. 43): *They possessed it, and dwelt therein*. Though they had often forfeited the benefit of that promise, and God had long delayed the performance of it, yet at last all difficulties were conquered, and Canaan was their own. And the promise of the heavenly Canaan is as sure to all God's spiritual Israel, for it is the promise of him that cannot lie.

II. God had promised to give them rest in that land, and now they had rest round about, rest from the fatigues of their travel through the wilderness (which tedious march, perhaps, was long in their bones), rest from their wars in Canaan, and the insults which their enemies there had at first offer'd them. They now dwelt, not only in habitations of their own, but those quiet and peaceable ones; though there were Canaanites that remained, yet none that had either strength or spirit to attack them, nor so much as give them an alarm. This rest continued till they by their own sin and folly put thorns into their own beds and their own eyes.

III. God had promised to give them victory and success in their wars, and this promise likewise was fulfilled: *There stood not a man before them*, v. 44. They had the better in every battle, and which way soever they turned their forces they prospered. It is true there were Canaanites now remaining in many parts of the land, and such as afterwards made head against them, and became very formidable. But, 1. As to the present remains of the Canaanites, they were no contradiction to the promise, for God had said he would not drive them out all at once, but by *little and little*, Ex. 23:30. They had now as much in their full possession as they had occasion for and as they had hands to manage, so that the Canaanites only kept possession of some of the less cultivated parts of the country against the beasts of the field, till Israel, in process of time, should become numerous enough to replenish them. 2. As to the after prevalency of the Canaanites, that was purely the effect of Israel's cowardice and slothfulness, and the punishment of their sinful inclination to the idolatries and other abominations of the heathen, whom the Lord would have cast out before them but that they harboured and indulged them. So that the foundation of God stands sure. Israel's experience of God's fidelity is here upon record, and is an acquittance under their hands to the honour of God, the vindication of his promise which had been so often distrusted, and the encouragement of all believers to the end of the world: *There failed not any good thing*, no, nor *aught* of any good thing (so full is it expressed), *which the Lord had spoken unto the*

house of Israel, but in due time *all came to pass*, v. 45. Such an acknowledgment as this, here subscribed by Joshua in the name of all Israel, we afterwards find made by Solomon, and all Israel did in effect say *Amen* to it, 1 Ki. 8:56. The inviolable truth of God's promise, and the performance of it to the utmost, are what all the saints have been ready to bear their testimony to; and, if in any thing the performance has seemed to come short, they have been as ready to own that they themselves must bear all the blame.

Chapter 22

Many particular things we have read concerning the two tribes and a half, though nothing separated them from the rest of the tribes except the river Jordan, and this chapter is wholly concerning them. I. Joshua's dismissal of the militia of those tribes from the camp of Israel, in which they had served as auxiliaries, during all the wars of Canaan, and their return thereupon to their own country (v. 1-9). II. The altar they built on the borders of Jordan, in token of their communion with the land of Israel (v. 10). III. The offence which the rest of the tribes took at this altar, and the message they sent thereupon (v. 11-20). IV. The apology which the two tribes and a half made for what they had done (v. 21-29). V. The satisfaction which their apology gave to the rest of the tribes (v. 30-34). And (which is strange), whereas in most differences that happen there is a fault on both sides, on this there was fault on no side; none (for aught that appears) were to be blamed, but all to be praised.

Verses 1-9

The war being ended, and ended gloriously, Joshua, as a prudent general, disbands his army, who never designed to make war their trade, and sends them home, to enjoy what they had conquered, and to beat their swords into plough-shares and their spears into pruning-hooks; and particularly the forces of these separate tribes, who had received their inheritance on the other side Jordan from Moses upon this condition, that their men of war should assist the other tribes in the conquest of Canaan, which they promised to do (Num. 32:32), and renewed the promise to Joshua at the opening of the campaign, Jos. 1:16. And, now that they had performed their bargain, Joshua publicly and solemnly in Shiloh gives them their discharge. Whether this was done, as it was placed, not till after the land was divided, as some think, or whether after the war was ended, and before the division was made, as others think (because there was no need of their assistance in dividing the land, but only in conquering it, nor were there any of their tribes employed as commissioners in that affair, but only of the other ten, Num. 34:18, etc.), this is certain, it was not done till after Shiloh was made the head-quarters (v. 2), and the land was begun to be divided before they removed from Gilgal, ch. 14:6.

It is probable that this army of Reubenites and Gadites, which had led the van in all the wars of Canaan, had sometimes, in the intervals of action, and when the rest of the army retired into winter-quarters, some of them at least, made a step over Jordan, for it was not far, to visit their families, and to look after their private affairs, and perhaps tarried at home, and sent others in their room more serviceable; but still these two tribes and a half had their quota of troops ready, 40,000 in all, which, whenever there was occasion, presented themselves at their respective posts, and now attended in a body to receive their discharge. Though their affection to their families, and concern for their affairs, could not but make them, after so long an absence, very desirous to return, yet, like good soldiers, they would not move till they had orders from their general. So, though our heavenly Father's house above be ever so desirable (it is bishop Hall's allusion), yet must we stay on earth till our warfare be accomplished, wait for a due discharge, and not anticipate the time of our removal.

I. Joshua dismisses them to the *land of their possession*, v. 4. Those that were first in the assignment of their lot were last in the enjoyment of it; they got the start of their brethren in title, but their brethren were before them in full possession; so *the last*

shall be first, and the first last, that there may be something of equality.

II. He dismisses them with their pay; for who goes a warfare at his own charge? *Return with much riches unto your tents*, v. 8. Though all the land they had helped to conquer was to go to the other tribes, yet they should have their share of the plunder, and had so, and this was all the pay that any of the soldiers expected; for the wars of Canaan bore their own charges. "Go," says Joshua, "go home to your tents," that is, "your houses," which he calls *tents*, because they had been so much used to tents in the wilderness; and indeed the strongest and stateliest houses in this world are to be looked upon but as tents, mean and movable in comparison with our house above. "Go home *with much riches*, not only cattle, the spoil of the country, but silver and gold, the plunder of the cities, and," 1. "Let your brethren whom you leave behind have your good word, who have allowed you your share in full, though the land is entirely theirs, and have not offered to make any drawback. Do not say that you are losers by us." 2. "Let your brethren whom you go to, who abode by the stuff, have some share of the spoil: *Divide the spoil with your brethren*, as that was divided which was taken in the war with Midian, Num. 31:27. Let your brethren that have wanted you all this while be the better for you when you come home."

III. He dismisses them with a very honourable character. Though their service was a due debt, and the performance of a promise, and they had done no more than was their duty to do, yet he highly commends them; not only gives them up their bonds, as it were, now that they had fulfilled the condition, but applauds their good services. Though it was by the favour of God and his power that Israel got possession of this land, and he must have all the glory, yet Joshua thought there was a thankful acknowledgment due to their brethren who assisted them, and whose sword and bow were employed for them. God must be chiefly eyed in our praises, yet instruments must not be altogether overlooked. He here commends them, 1. For the readiness of their obedience to their commanders, v. 2. When Moses was gone, they remembered and observed the charge he had given them; and all the orders which Joshua, as general of the forces, had issued out, they had carefully obeyed, went, and came, and did, as he appointed, Mt. 8:9. It is as much as any thing the soldier's praise to observe the word of command. 2. For the constancy of their affection and adherence to their brethren: *You have not left them these many days*. How many days he does not say, nor can we gather it with certainty from any other place. Calvisius and others of the best chronologers compute that the conquering and dividing of the land was the work of about six or seven years, and so long these separate tribes attended their camp, and did them the best service they could. Note, It will be the honour of those that have espoused the cause of God's Israel, and twisted interests with them, to adhere to them, and never to leave them till God has given them rest, and then they shall rest with them. 3. For the faithfulness of their obedience to the divine law. They had not only done their duty to Joshua and Israel, but, which was best of all, they had made conscience of their duty to God: *You have kept the charge*, or, as the word is, *You have kept the keeping*, that is, "You have carefully and circumspectly kept the *commandment of the Lord your God*, not only in this particular instance of continuing in the service of Israel to the end of the war, but, in general, you have kept up religion in your part of the camp, a rare and excellent thing among soldiers, and where it is worthy to be praised."

IV. He dismisses them with good counsel, not to cultivate their ground, fortify their cities, and, now that their hands were inured to war and victory, to invade their neighbours, and so enlarge their own territories, but to keep up serious godliness

among them in the power of it. They were not political but pious instructions that he gave them, v. 5. 1. In general, to *take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law*. Those that have the commandment have it in vain unless they *do* the commandment; and it will not be done aright (so apt are we to turn aside, and so industrious are our spiritual enemies to turn us aside) unless we take heed, diligent heed. 2. In particular, to *love the Lord our God*, as the best of beings, and the best of friends; and as far as this principle rules in the heart, and is the spring of its pulses, there will be a constant care and sincere endeavour to *walk in his ways*, in all his ways, even those that are narrow and up-hill, in every particular instance, in all manner of conversation to *keep his commandments*, at all times and in all conditions with purpose of heart to *cleave unto him*, and to serve him and his honour, and the interest of his kingdom among men, *with all our heart and with all our soul*. What good counsel was here given to them is given to us all. God give us grace to take it!

V. He dismisses them with a blessing (v. 6), particularly the half tribe of Manasseh, to which Joshua, as an Ephraimite, was somewhat nearer akin than to the other two, and who perhaps were the more loth to depart because they left one half of their own tribe behind them, and therefore, bidding often farewell, and lingering behind, had a second dismissal and blessing, v. 7. Joshua not only prayed for them as a friend, but blessed them as a father in the name of the Lord, recommending them, their families, and affairs, to the grace of God. Some by the blessing Joshua gave them understand the presents he made them, in recompence of their services; but Joshua being a prophet, and having given them one part of a prophet's reward in the instructions he gave them (v. 5), no doubt we must understand this of the other, even the prayers he made for them, as one having authority, and as God's vicegerent.

VI. Being thus dismissed, they returned to *the land of their possession* in a body (v. 9), ferry-boats being, it is likely, provided for their repassing Jordan. Though masters of families may sometimes have occasion to be absent, long absent, from their families, yet, when their business abroad is finished, they must remember home is their place, from which they ought not to wander as a bird from her nest.

Verses 10-20

Here is, I. The pious care of the separated tribes to keep their hold of Canaan's religion, even when they were leaving Canaan's land, that they might not be as the *sons of the stranger, utterly separated from God's people*, Isa. 56:3. In order to this, they built a great altar on the borders of Jordan, to be a witness for them that they were Israelites, and as such *partakers of the altar of the Lord*, 1 Co. 10:18. When they came to Jordan (v. 10) they did not consult how to preserve the remembrance of their own exploits in the wars of Canaan, and the services they had done their brethren, by erecting a monument to the immortal honour of the two tribes and a half; but their relation to the church of God, together with their interest in the communion of saints, is that which they are solicitous to preserve and perpetuate the proofs and evidences of; and therefore without delay, when the thing was first proposed by some among them, who, though glad to think that they were going towards home, were sorry to think that they were going from the altar of God, immediately they erected this altar, which served as a bridge to keep up their fellowship with the other tribes in the things of God. Some think they built this altar on the Canaan-side of Jordan, in the lot of Benjamin, that, looking over the river, they might see the figure of the altar at Shiloh, when they could not conveniently go to

it; but it is more likely that they built it on their own side of the water, for what had they to do to build on another man's land without his consent? And it is said to be *over-against* the land of Canaan; nor would there have been any cause of suspecting it designed for sacrifice if they had not built it among themselves. This altar was very innocently and honestly designed, but it would have been well if, since it had in it an appearance of evil, and might be an occasion of offence to their brethren, they had consulted the oracle of God about it before they did it, or at least acquainted their brethren with their purpose, and given them the same explication of their altar before, to prevent their jealousy, which they did afterwards, to remove it. Their zeal was commendable, but it ought to have been guided with discretion. There was no need to hasten the building of an altar for the purpose for which they intended this, but they might have taken time to consider and take advice; yet, when their sincerity was made to appear, we do not find that they were blamed for their rashness. God does, and men should, overlook the weakness of an honest zeal.

II. The holy jealousy of the other tribes for the honour of God and his altar at Shiloh. Notice was immediately brought to the princes of Israel of the setting up of this altar, v. 11. And they, knowing how strict and severe that law was which required them to offer all their sacrifices in the place which God should choose, and not elsewhere (Deu. 12:5-7), were soon apprehensive that the setting up of another altar was an affront to the choice which God had lately made of a place to put his name in, and had a direct tendency to the worship of some other God. Now,

1. Their suspicion was very excusable, for it must be confessed the thing, *prima facie*—*at first sight*, looked ill, and seemed to imply a design to set up and maintain a competitor with the altar at Shiloh. It was no strained *innuendo* from the building of an altar to infer an intention to offer sacrifice upon it, and that might introduce idolatry and end in a total apostasy from the faith and worship of the God of Israel. So great a matter might this fire kindle. God is jealous for his own institutions, and therefore we should be so too, and afraid of every thing that looks like, or leads to, idolatry.

2. Their zeal, upon this suspicion, was very commendable, v. 12. When they apprehended that these tribes, which by the river Jordan were separated from them, were separating themselves from God, they took it as the greatest injury that could be done to themselves, and showed a readiness, if it were necessary, to put their lives in their hands in defence of the altar of God, and to take up arms for the chastising and reducing of these rebels, and to prevent the spreading of the infection, if no gentler methods would serve, by cutting off from their body the gangrened member. They all gathered together, and Shiloh was the place of their rendezvous, because it was in defence of the divine charter lately granted to that place that they now appeared; their resolution was as became a kingdom of priests, who, being devoted to God and his service, did not *acknowledge their brethren* nor *know their own children*, Deu. 33:9. They would immediately *go up to war against them* if it appeared they had revolted from God, and were in rebellion against him. Though they were *bone of their bone*, had been *companions with them in tribulation* in the wilderness, and serviceable to them in the wars of Canaan, yet, if they turn to *serve other gods*, they will treat them as enemies, not as sons of Israel, but as *children of whoredoms*, for so God had appointed, Deu. 13:12, etc. They had but lately sheathed their swords, and retired from the perils and fatigues of war to the rest God had given them, and yet they are willing to begin a new war rather than be any way wanting in their duty to restrain, repress, and revenge, idolatry, and every

step towards it—a brave resolution, and which shows them hearty for their religion, and, we hope, careful and diligent in the practice of it themselves. Corruptions in religion are best dealt with at first, before they get head and plead prescription.

3. Their prudence in the prosecution of this zealous resolution is no less commendable. God had appointed them, in cases of this nature, to *enquire and make search* (Deu. 13:14), that they might not wrong their brethren under pretence of righting their religion; accordingly they resolve here not to send forth their armies, to wage war, till they had first sent their ambassadors to enquire into the merits of the cause, and these men of the first rank, one out of each tribe, and Phinehas at the head of them to be their spokesman, v. 13, 14. Thus was their zeal for God tempered, guided, and governed by the *meekness of wisdom*. He that knows all things, and hates all evil things, would not punish the worst of criminals but he would first *go down and see*, Gen. 18:21. Many an unhappy strife would be prevented, or soon healed by an impartial and favourable enquiry into that which is the matter of the offence. The rectifying of mistakes and misunderstandings, and the setting of misconstrued words and actions in a true light, would be the most effectual way to accommodate both private and public quarrels, and bring them to a happy period.

4. The ambassadors' management of this matter came fully up to the sense and spirit of the congregation concerning it, and bespeaks much both of zeal and prudence.

(1.) The charge they draw up against their brethren is indeed very high, and admits no other excuse than that it was in their zeal for the honour of God, and was now intended to justify the resentments of the congregation at Shiloh and to awaken the supposed delinquents to clear themselves, otherwise they might have suspended their judgment, or mollified it at least, and not have taken it for granted, as they do here (v. 16), that the building of this altar was *a trespass against the God of Israel*, and a trespass no less heinous than the revolt of soldiers from their captain (*you turn from following the Lord*), and the rebellion of subjects against their sovereign: *that you might rebel this day against the Lord*. Hard words. It is well they were not able to make good their charge. Let not innocency think it strange to be thus misrepresented and accused. *They laid to my charge things that I knew not*.

(2.) The aggravation of the crime charged upon their brethren is somewhat far-fetched: *Is the iniquity of Peor too little for us?* v. 17. Probably that is mentioned because Phinehas, the first commissioner in this treaty, had signalized himself in that matter (Num. 25:7), and because we may suppose they were not about the very place in which that iniquity was committed on the other side Jordan. It is good to recollect and improve those instances of the wrath of God, revealed from heaven *against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men*, which have fallen out in our own time, and which we ourselves have been eye-witnesses of. He reminds them of the iniquity of Peor, [1.] As a very great sin, and very provoking to God. The building of this altar seemed but a small matter, but it might lead to an iniquity as bad as that of Peor, and therefore must be crushed in its first rise. Note, The remembrance of great sins committed formerly should engage us to stand upon our guard against the least occasions and beginnings of sin; for the way of sin is down-hill. [2.] As a sin that the whole congregation had smarted for: *"There was a plague in the congregation of the Lord*, of which, in one day, there died no fewer than 24,000; was not that enough for ever to warn you against idolatry? What! will you bring upon yourselves another plague? Are you so mad upon an

idolatrous altar that you will run yourselves thus upon the sword's point of God's judgments? Does not our camp still feel from that sin and the punishment of it? *We are not cleansed from it unto this day*; there are remaining sparks," *First*, "Of the infection of that sin; some among us so inclined to idolatry that if you set up another altar they will soon take occasion from that, whether you intend it or no, to worship another God." *Secondly*, "Of the wrath of God against us for that sin. We have reason to fear that, if we provoke God by another sin *to visit*, he will remember against us the iniquity of Peor, as he threatened to do that of the golden calf, Ex. 32:34. And dare you wake the sleeping lion of divine vengeance?" Note, It is a foolish and dangerous thing for people to think their former sins little, *too little for them*, as those do who add sin to sin, and so *treasure up wrath against the day of wrath*. Let therefore the time past suffice, 1 Pt. 4:3.

(3.) The reason they give for their concerning themselves so warmly in this matter is very sufficient. They were obliged to it, in their own necessary defence, by the law of self-preservation: "For, if you revolt from God to-day, who knows but to-morrow his judgments may break in upon the *whole congregation* (v. 18), as in the case of Achan? v. 20. He sinned, and we all smarted for it, by which we should receive instruction, and from what God did then infer what he may do, and fear what he will do, if we do not witness against your sin, who are so many, and punish it." Note, The conservators of the public peace are obliged, in justice to the common safety, to use their power for the restraining and suppressing of vice and profaneness, lest, if it be connived at, the sin thereby become national, and bring God's judgments upon the community. Nay, we are all concerned to reprove our neighbour when he does amiss, lest we bear sin for him, Lev. 19:17.

(4.) The offer they make is very fair and kind (v. 19), that if they thought the land of their possession unclean, for want of an altar, and therefore could not be easy without one, rather than they should set up another in competition with that at Shiloh they should be welcome to come back to the land *where the Lord's tabernacle was*, and settle there, and they would very willingly straiten themselves to make room for them. By this they showed a sincere and truly pious zeal against schism, that rather than their brethren should have any occasion to set up a separate altar, though their pretence for it, as here supposed, was very weak and grounded upon a great mistake, yet they were willing to part with a considerable share of the land which God himself had by the lot assigned them, to comprehend them and take them in among them. This was the spirit of Israelites indeed.

Verses 21-29

We may suppose there was a general convention called of the princes and great men of the separate tribes, to give audience to these ambassadors; or perhaps the army, as it came home, was still encamped in a body, and not yet dispersed; however it was, there were enough to represent the two tribes and a half, and to give their sense. Their reply to the warm remonstrance of the ten tribes is very fair and ingenuous. They do not retort their charge, upbraid them with the injustice and unkindness of their threatenings, nor reproach them for their rash and hasty censures, but give them a soft answer which turns away wrath, avoiding all those *grievous words which stir up anger*; they demur not to their jurisdiction, nor plead that they were not accountable to them for what they had done, nor bid them mind their own business, but, by a free and open declaration of their sincere intention in what they did, free themselves from the imputation they were under, and set themselves right in the opinion of their brethren, to do which they only needed to state the case and put the matter in a true light.

I. They solemnly protest against any design to use this altar for sacrifice or offering, and therefore were far from setting it up in competition with the altar at Shiloh, or from entertaining the least thought of deserting that. They had indeed set up that which had the shape and fashion of an altar, but they had not dedicated it to a religious use, had had no solemnity of its consecration, and therefore ought not to be charged with a design to put it to any such use. To gain credit to this protestation here is,

1. A solemn appeal to God concerning it, with which they begin their defence, intending thereby to give glory to God first, and then to give satisfaction to their brethren, v. 22. (1.) A profound awe and reverence of God are expressed in the form of their appeal: *The Lord God of gods, the Lord God of gods, he knows*. Or, as it might be read somewhat closer to the original, *The God of gods, Jehovah, the God of gods, Jehovah, he knows*, which bespeaks his self-existence and self-sufficiency; he is Jehovah, and has sovereignty and supremacy over all beings and powers whatsoever, even those that are called *gods*, or that are worshipped. This brief confession of their faith would help to obviate and remove their brethren's suspicion of them, as if they intended to desert the God of Israel, and worship other gods: how could those entertain such a thought who believed him to be God over all? Let us learn hence always to speak of God with reverence and seriousness, and to mention his name with a solemn pause. Those who make their appeals to heaven with a slight, careless, "God knows," have reason to fear lest they take his name in vain, for it is very unlike this appeal. (2.) It is a great confidence of their own integrity which they express in the matter of their appeal. They refer the controversy to the God of gods, whose judgment, we are sure, is *according to truth*, such as the guilty have reason to dread and the upright to rejoice in. "If it be *in rebellion or transgression* that we have built this altar, to confront the altar of the Lord at Shiloh, to make a party, or to set up any new gods or worships," [1.] "He knows it (v. 22), for he is perfectly acquainted with the thoughts and intents of the heart, and particularly with all inclinations to idolatry (Ps. 44:20, 21); this is in a particular manner before him. We believe he knows it, and we cannot by any arts conceal it from him." [2.] "Let him require it, as we know he will, for he is a jealous God." Nothing but a clear conscience would have thus imprecated divine justice to avenge the rebellion if there had been any. Note, *First*, In every thing we do in religion, it highly concerns us to approve ourselves to God in our integrity therein, remembering that he knows the heart. *Secondly*, When we fall under the censures of men, it is very comfortable to be able with a humble confidence to appeal to God concerning our sincerity. See 1 Co. 4:3, 4.

2. A sober apology presented to their brethren: *Israel, he shall know*. Though the record on high, and the witness in our bosoms, are principally to be made sure for us, yet there is a satisfaction besides which we owe to our brethren who doubt concerning our integrity, and which we should be ready to give with meekness and fear. If our sincerity be known to God, we should study likewise to let others know it by its fruits, especially those who, though they mistake us, yet show a zeal for the glory of God, as the ten tribes here did.

3. A serious abjuration or renunciation of the design which they were suspected to be guilty of. With this they conclude their defence (v. 29): "God forbid that we should rebel against the Lord, as we own we should if we had set up this altar for burnt-offerings; no, we abhor the thought of it. We have as great a value and veneration for the altar of the Lord at Shiloh as any of the tribes of Israel have, and are as firmly resolved to adhere to it and constantly to attend it; we have the same concern that

you have for the purity of God's worship and the unity of his church; far be it, far be it from us, to think of turning away from following God."

II. They fully explain their true intent and meaning in building this altar; and we have all the reason in the world to believe that it is a true representation of their design, and not advanced now to palliate it afterwards, as we have reason to think that these same persons meant very honestly when they petitioned to have their lot on that side Jordan, though then also it was their unhappiness to be misunderstood even by Moses himself. In their vindication, they make it out that the building of this altar was so far from being a step towards a separation from their brethren, and from the altar of the Lord at Shiloh, that, on the contrary, it was really designed for a pledge and preservative of their communion with their brethren and with the altar of God, and a token of their resolution to *do the service of the Lord before him* (v. 27), and to continue to do so.

1. They gave an account of the fears they had lest, in process of time, their posterity, being seated at such a distance from the tabernacle, should be looked upon and treated as strangers to the commonwealth of Israel (v. 24); it was for fear of this thing, and the word signifies a great perplexity and solicitude of mind which they were in, until they eased themselves by this expedient. As they were returning home (and we may suppose it was not thought of before, else they would have made Joshua acquainted with their purpose), some of them in discourse started this matter, and the rest took the hint, and represented to themselves and one another a very melancholy prospect of what might probably happen in after-ages, that their children would be looked upon by the other tribes as having no interest in the altar of God and the sacrifices there offered. Now indeed they were owned as brethren, and were as welcome at the tabernacle as any other of the tribes; but what if their children after them should be disowned? They, by reason of their distance, and the interposition of Jordan, which it was not easy at all times to pass and repass, could not be so numerous and constant in their attendance on the three yearly feasts as the other tribes, to make a continual claim to the privileges of Israelites, and would therefore be looked upon as inconsiderable members of their church, and by degrees would be rejected as not members of it at all: *So shall your children* (who in their pride will be apt to monopolize the privileges of the altar) *make our children* (who perhaps will not be so careful as they ought to be to keep hold of those privileges) *cease from fearing the Lord*. Note, (1.) Those that are cut off from public ordinances are likely to lose all religion, and will by degrees cease from fearing the Lord. Though the form and profession of godliness are kept up by many without the life and power of it, yet the life and power of it will not long be kept up without the form and profession. You take away grace if you take away the means of grace. (2.) Those who have themselves found the comfort and benefit of God's ordinances cannot but desire to preserve and perpetuate the entail of them upon their seed, and use all possible precautions that their children after them may not be *made to cease from following the Lord*, or be looked upon as having no part in him.

2. The project they had to prevent this, v. 26–28. "Therefore, to secure an interest in the altar of God to those who shall come after us, and to prove their title to it, *we said, Let us build an altar, to be a witness between us and you,*" that, having this copy of the altar in their custody, it might be produced as an evidence of their right to the privilege of the original. Every one that saw this altar, and observed that it was never used for sacrifice and offering, would enquire what was the meaning of it, and this answer would be given to that enquiry, that it was built by those separate tribes, in token of their communion with their

brethren and their joint-interest with them in the altar of the Lord. Christ is the great altar that sanctifies every gift; the best evidence of our interest in him will be the pattern of his Spirit in our hearts, and our conformity to him. If we can produce this it will be a testimony for us that we have *a part in the Lord*, and an earnest of our perseverance in following him.

Verses 30-34

We have here the good issue of this controversy, which, if there had not been on both sides a disposition to peace, as there was on both sides a zeal for God, might have been of ill consequence; for quarrels about religion, for want of wisdom and love, often prove the most fierce and most difficult to be accommodated. But these contending parties, when the matter was fairly stated and argued, were so happy as to understand one another very well, and so the difference was presently compromised.

I. The ambassadors were exceedingly pleased when the separate tribes had given in a protestation of the innocency of their intentions in building this altar. 1. The ambassadors did not call in question their sincerity in that protestation, did not say, "You tell us you design it not for sacrifice and offering, but who can believe you? What security will you give us that it shall never be so used?" No. *Charity believes all things, hopes all things*, believes and hopes the best, and is very loth to give the lie to any. 2. They did not upbraid them with the rashness and unadvisedness of this action, did not tell them, "If you would do such a thing, and with this good intention, yet you might have had so much respect for Joshua and Eleazar as to have advised with them, or at least have made them acquainted with it, and so have saved the trouble and expense of this embassy." But a little want of consideration and good manners should be excused and overlooked in those who, we have reason to think, mean honestly. 3. Much less did they go about to fish for evidence to make out their charge, because they had once exhibited it, but were glad to have their mistake rectified, and were not at all ashamed to own it. Proud and peevish spirits, when they have passed an unjust censure upon their brethren, though ever so much convincing evidence be brought of the injustice of it, will stand to it, and can by no means be persuaded to retract it. These ambassadors were not so prejudiced; their brethren's vindication pleased them, v. 30. They looked upon their innocency as a token of God's presence (v. 31), especially when they found that what was done was so far from being an indication of their growing cool to the altar of God that, on the contrary, it was a fruit of their zealous affection to it: *You have delivered the children of Israel out of the hand of the Lord*, that is, "You have not, as we feared, delivered them into the hand of the Lord, or exposed them to his judgments by the trespass we were jealous of."

II. The congregation was abundantly satisfied when their ambassadors reported to them their brethren's apology for what they had done. It should seem they staid together, at least by their representatives, until they heard the issue (v. 32); and when they understood the truth of the matter it pleased them (v. 33), and they *blessed God*. Note, Our brethren's constancy in religion, their zeal for the power of godliness, and their keeping the *unity of the Spirit* in faith and love, notwithstanding the jealousies conceived of them as breaking the unity of the church, are things which we should be very glad to be satisfied of, and should make the matter both of our rejoicing and of our thanksgiving; let God have the glory of it, and let us take the comfort of it. Being thus satisfied, they laid down their arms immediately, and were so far from any thoughts of prosecuting the war they had been meditating against their brethren that we may suppose them wishing for the next feast, when they should meet them at

Shiloh.

III. The separate tribes were gratified, and, since they had a mind to preserve among them this pattern of the altar of God, though there was not likely to be that occasion for it which they fancied, yet Joshua and the princes let them have their humour, and did not give orders for the demolishing of it, though there was as much reason to fear that it might in process of time be an occasion of idolatry as there was to hope that ever it might be a preservation from idolatry. Thus did *the strong bear the infirmities of the weak*. Only care was taken that they having explained the meaning of their altar, that it was intended for no more than a testimony of their communion with the altar at Shiloh, this explanation should be recorded, which was done according to the usage of those times by giving a name to it signifying so much (v. 34); they called it *Ed, a witness* to that, and no more, a witness of the relation they stood in to God and Israel, and of their concurrence with the rest of the tribes in the same common faith, *that Jehovah he is God*, he and no other. It was a witness to posterity of their care to transmit their religion pure and entire to them, and would be a witness against them if ever they should forsake God and turn from following after him

Chapter 23

In this and the following chapter we have two farewell sermons, which Joshua preached to the people of Israel a little before his death. Had he designed to gratify the curiosity of succeeding ages, he would rather have recorded the method of Israel's settlement in their new conquests, their husbandry, manufacturers, trade, customs, courts of justice, and the constitutions of their infant commonwealth, which one would wish to be informed of; but that which he intended in the registers of this book was to entail on posterity a sense of religion and their duty to God; and therefore, overlooking these things which are the usual subjects of a common history, he here transmits to his reader the methods he took to persuade Israel to be faithful to their covenant with their God, which might have a good influence on the generations to come who should read those reasonings, as we may hope they had on that generation which then heard them. In this chapter we have, I. A convention of the states called (v. 1, 2), probably to consult about the common concerns of their land, and to set in order that which, after some years' trial, being left to their prudence, was found wanting. II. Joshua's speech to them as the opening, or perhaps at the concluding, of the sessions, to hear which was the principal design of their coming together. In it, 1. Joshua reminds them of what God had done for them (v. 3, 4, 9, 14), and what he was ready to do yet further (v. 5, 10). 2. He exhorts them carefully and resolutely to persevere in their duty to God (v. 6, 8, 11). III. He cautions them against all familiarity with their idolatrous neighbours (v. 7). IV. He gives them fair warning of the fatal consequences of it, if they should revolt from God and turn to idols (v. 12, 13, 15, 16). In all this he showed himself zealous for his God, and jealous over Israel with a godly jealousy.

Verses 1-10

As to the date of this edict of Joshua,

I. No mention at all is made of the place where this general assembly was held; some think it was at Timnath-serah, Joshua's own city, where he lived, and whence, being old, he could not well remove. But it does not appear that he took so much state upon him; therefore it is more probable this meeting was at Shiloh, where the tabernacle of meeting was, and to which place, perhaps, all the males that could had now come up to worship before the Lord, at one of the three great feasts, which Joshua took the opportunity of, for the delivering of this charge to them.

II. There is only a general mention of the time when this was done. It was *long after the Lord had given them rest*, but it is not said how long, v. 1. It was, 1. So long as that Israel had time to feel the comforts of their rest and possessions in Canaan, and to enjoy the advantages of that good land. 2. So long as that Joshua had time to observe which ways their danger lay of being corrupted, namely, by their intimacy with the Canaanites that remained, against which he is therefore careful to arm them.

III. The persons to whom Joshua made this speech: *To all Israel, even their elders, etc.* So it might be read, v. 2. They could not all come within hearing, but he called for all the elders, that is, the privy-counsellors, which in later times constituted the great Sanhedrim, the heads of the tribes, that is, the noblemen and gentlemen of their respective countries, the judges learned in the laws, that tried criminals and causes, and gave judgment upon them, and, *lastly*, the officers or sheriffs, who were entrusted with the execution of those judgments. These Joshua called together, and to them he addressed himself, 1. That they might

communicate what he said, or at least the sense and substance of it, to those under them in their respective countries, and so this charge might be dispersed through the whole nation. 2. Because, if they would be prevailed upon to serve God and cleave to him, they, by their influence on the common people, would keep them faithful. If great men be good men, they will help to make many good.

IV. Joshua's circumstances when he gave them this charge: He *was old and stricken in age* (v. 1), probably it was in the last year of his life, and he lived to be 110 years old, ch. 24:29. And he himself takes notice of it, in the first words of his discourse, v. 2. When he began to be old, some years ago, God reminded him of it (ch. 13:1): *Thou art old*. But now he did himself feel so much of the decays of age that he needed not to be told of it, he readily speaks of it himself: *I am old and stricken in age*. He uses it, 1. As an argument with himself to give them this charge, because being old he could expect to be but a little while with them, to advise and instruct them, and therefore (as Peter speaks, 2 Pt. 1:13) *as long as he is in this tabernacle* he will take all opportunities to *put them in remembrance* of their duty, knowing by the increasing infirmities of age that he must shortly put off this tabernacle, and desiring that after his decease they might continue as good as they were now. When we see death hastening towards us, this should quicken us to do the work of life with all our might. 2. As an argument with them to give heed to what he said. he was old and experienced, and therefore to be the more regarded, for days should speak; he had grown old in their service, and had spent himself for their good, and therefore was to be the more regarded by them. He was old and dying; they would not have him long to preach to them; therefore let them observe what he said now, and lay it up in store for the time to come.

V. The discourse itself, the scope of which is to engage them if possible, them and their seed after them, to persevere in the true faith and worship of the God of Israel.

1. He puts them in mind of the great things God had done for them, now in his days, and under his administration, for here he goes no further back. And for the proof of this he appeals to their own eyes (v. 3): *"You have seen all that the Lord your God has done; not what I have done, or what you have done (we were only instruments in God's hand), but what God himself has done by me and for you."* (1.) Many great and mighty nations (as the rate of nations then went) were driven out from as fine a country as any was at that time upon the face of the earth, to make room for Israel. *"You see what he has done to these nations, who were his creatures, the work of his hands, and whom he could have made new creatures and fit for his service; yet see what destruction he has made of them because of you (v. 2), how he has driven them out from before you (v. 9), as if they were of no account with him, though great and strong in comparison with you."* (2.) They were not only driven out (this they might have been, and yet sent to some other country less rich to begin a new plantation there, suppose to that wilderness in which Israel had wandered so long, and so they would only have exchanged seats with them), but they were trodden down before them; though they held out against them with the greatest obstinacy that could be, yet they were subdued before them, which made the possessing of their land so much the more glorious to Israel and so much the more illustrious an instance of the power and goodness of the God of Israel (v. 3): *"The Lord your God has not only led you, and fed you, and kept you, but he has fought for you as a man of war,"* by which title he was known among them when he first brought them out of Egypt, Ex.

15:3. So clear and cheap were all their victories, during the course of this long war, that *no man had been able to stand before them* (v. 9), that is, to make head against them, so as to put them in fear, create them any difficulty, or give any check to the progress of their victorious arms. In every battle they carried the day, and in every siege they carried the city; their loss before Ai was upon a particular occasion, was inconsiderable, and only served to show them on what terms they stood with God; but, otherwise, never was army crowned with such a constant uninterrupted series of successes as the armies of Israel were in the wars of Canaan. (3.) They had not only conquered the Canaanites, but were put in full possession of their land (v. 4): "*I have divided to you by lot these nations, both those which are cut off and those which remain, not only that you may spoil and plunder them, and live at discretion in their country for a time, but to be a sure and lasting inheritance for your tribes. You have it not only under your feet, but in your hands.*"

2. He assures them of God's readiness to carry on and complete this glorious work in due time. It is true some of the Canaanites did yet remain, and in some places were strong and daring, but this should be no disappointment to their expectations; when Israel was so multiplied as to be able to replenish this land God would expel the Canaanites to the last man, provided Israel would pursue their advantages and carry on the war against them with vigour (v. 5): "*The Lord your God will drive them from out of your sight, so that there shall not be a Canaanite to be seen in the land; and even that part of the country which is yet in their hands you shall possess.*" If it were objected that the men of war of the several tribes being dispersed to their respective countries, and the army disbanded, it would be difficult to get them together when there was occasion to renew the war upon the remainder of the Canaanites, in answer to this he tells them what little need they had to be in care about the numbers of their forces (v. 10): "*One man of you shall chase a thousand, as Jonathan did, 1 Sa. 14:13. "Each tribe may venture for itself, and for the recovery of its own lot, without fearing disadvantage by the disproportion of numbers; for the Lord your God, whose all power is, both to inspirit and to dispirit, and who has all the creatures at his beck, he it is that fighteth for you; and how many do you reckon him for?"*"

3. He hereupon most earnestly charges them to adhere to their duty, to go on and persevere in the good ways of the Lord wherein they had so well set out. He exhorts them,

(1.) To be very courageous (v. 6): "*God fighteth for you against your enemies, do you therefore behave yourselves valiantly for him. Keep and do with a firm resolution all that is written in the book of the law.*" He presses upon them no more than what they were already bound to. "*Keep with care, do with diligence, and eye what is written with sincerity.*"

(2.) To be very cautious: "*Take heed of missing it, either on the right hand or on the left, for there are errors and extremes on both hands. Take heed of running either into a profane neglect of any of God's institutions or into a superstitious addition of any of your own inventions.*" They must especially take heed of all approaches towards idolatry, the sin to which they were first inclined and would be most tempted, v. 7. [1.] They must not acquaint themselves with idolaters, nor come among them to visit them or be present at any of their feasts or entertainments, for they could not contract any intimacy nor keep up any conversation with them, without danger of infection. [2.] They must not show the least respect to any idol, nor *make mention of the name of their gods*, but endeavour to bury the remembrance of them in perpetual oblivion, that the worship of them may

never be revived. "Let the very name of them be forgotten. Look upon idols as filthy detestable things, not to be named without the utmost loathing and detestation." The Jews would not suffer their children to name swine's flesh, because it was forbidden, lest the name of it should occasion their desiring it; but, if they had occasion to speak of it, they must call it *that strange thing*. It is a pity that among Christians the names of the heathen gods are so commonly used, and made so familiar as they are, especially in plays and poems: let those names which have been set up in rivalship with God be for ever loathed and lost. [3.] They must not countenance others in showing respect to them. They must not only not swear by them themselves, but they must not cause others to swear by them, which supposes that they must not make any covenants with idolaters, because they, in the confirming of their covenants, would swear by their idols; never let Israelites admit such an oath. [4.] They must take heed of these occasions of idolatry, lest by degrees they should arrive at the highest step of it, which was serving false gods, and bowing down to them, against the letter of the second commandment.

(3.) To be very constant (v. 8): *Cleave unto the Lord your God*, that is, "delight in him, depend upon him, devote yourselves to his glory, and continue to do so to the end, *as you have done unto this day*, ever since you came to Canaan;" for, being willing to make the best of them, he looks not so far back as the iniquity of Peor. There might be many things amiss among them, but they had not forsaken the Lord their God, and it is in order to insinuate his exhortation to perseverance with the more pleasing power that he praises them. "Go on and prosper, for the Lord is with you while you are with him." Those that command should commend; the way to make people better is to make the best of them. "You have cleaved to the Lord unto this day, therefore go on to do so, else you lose the praise and recompence of what you have wrought. Your righteousness will not be mentioned unto you if you turn from it."

Verses 11-16

Here, I. Joshua directs them what to do, that they might persevere in religion, v. 11. Would we cleave to the Lord, and not forsake him, 1. We must always stand upon our guard, for many a precious soul is lost and ruined through carelessness: "Take heed therefore, *take good heed to yourselves*, to your *souls* (so the word is), that the inward man be kept clean from the pollutions of sin, and closely employed in the service of God." God has given us precious souls with this charge, "Take good heed to them, keep them with all diligence, above all keepings." 2. What we do in religion we must do from a principle of love, not by constraint or from a slavish fear of God, but of choice and with delight. "*Lord the Lord your God*, and you will not leave him."

II. He urges God's fidelity to them as an argument why they should be faithful to him (v. 14): "*I am going the way of all the earth*, I am old and dying." To die is to go a journey, a journey to our long home; it is the way of all the earth, the way that all mankind must go, sooner or later. Joshua himself, though so great and good a man, and one that could so ill be spared, cannot be exempted from this common lot. He takes notice of it here that they might look upon these as his dying words, and regard them accordingly. Or thus: "*I am dying*, and leaving you. *Me you have not always*; but if you cleave to the Lord he will never leave you." Or thus, "Now that I am near my end it is proper to look back upon the years that are past; and, in the review, I find, and you *yourselves know it in all your hearts and in all your souls*, by a full conviction on the clearest evidence, and the

thing has made an impression upon you"—(that knowledge does us good which is seated, not in the head only, but in the heart and soul, and with which we are duly affected)—"you know that *not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord spoke concerning you*" (and he spoke a great many); see ch. 21:45. God had promised them victory, rest, plenty, his tabernacle among them, etc., and *not one thing had failed* of all he had promised. "Now," said he, "has God been thus true to you? Be not you false to him." It is the apostle's argument for perseverance (Heb. 10:23), *He is faithful that has promised*. III. He gives them fair warning what would be the fatal consequences of apostasy (v. 12, 13, 15, 16): "If you go back, know for a certainty it will be your ruin." Observe,

1. How he describes the apostasy which he warns them against. The steps of it would be (v. 12) growing intimate with idolaters, who would craftily wheedle them, and insinuate themselves into their acquaintance, now that they had become lords of the country, to serve their own ends. The next step would be intermarrying with them, drawn to it by their artifices, who would be glad to bestow their children upon these wealthy Israelites. And the consequence of that would be (v. 16) *servicing other gods* (which were pretended to be the ancient deities of the country) and bowing down to them. Thus the way of sin is down-hill, and those who have fellowship with sinners cannot avoid having fellowship with sin. This he represents, (1.) As a base and shameful desertion; "it is going back from what you have so well begun," v. 12. (2.) As a most perfidious breach of promise (v. 16): "It is a transgression of *the covenant of the Lord your God, which he commanded you*, and which you yourselves set your hand to." Other sins were transgressions of the law God commanded them, but this was a transgression of the covenant he commanded them, and amounted to a breach of the relation between God and them and a forfeiture of all the benefits of the covenant.

2. How he describes the destruction which he warns them of. He tells them, (1.) That these remainders of the Canaanites, if they should harbour them, and indulge them, and join in affinity with them, would be snares and traps to them, both to draw them to sin (not only to idolatry, but to all immoralities, which would be the ruin, not only of their virtue, but of their wisdom and sense, their spirit and honour), and also to draw them into foolish bargains, unprofitable projects, and all manner of inconveniences; and having thus by underhand practices decoyed them into one mischief or other, so as to gain advantages against them, they would then act more openly, and be *scourges in their sides* and *thorns in their eyes*, would perhaps kill or drive away their cattle, burn or steal their corn, alarm or plunder their houses, and would be all ways possible be vexatious to them; for, whatever pretences of friendship they might make, a Canaanite, unless proselyted to the faith and worship of the true God, would in every age hate the very name and sight of an Israelite. See how the punishment would be made to answer the sin, nay, how the sin itself would be the punishment. (2.) That the anger of the Lord would be kindled against them. Their making leagues with the Canaanites would not only give those idolaters the opportunity of doing them a mischief, and be the fostering of snakes in their bosoms, but it would likewise provoke God to become their enemy, and would kindle the fire of his displeasure against them. (3.) That all the threatenings of the word would be fulfilled, as the promise had been, for the God of eternal truth is faithful to both (v. 15): "*As all good things have come upon you according to the promise, so long as you have kept close to God, so all evil things will come upon you according to the threatening, if you forsake him.*" Moses had *set before*

them good and evil; they had experienced the good, and were now in the enjoyment of it, and the evil would as certainly come if they were disobedient. As God's promises are not a fool's paradise, so his threatenings are not bugbears. (4.) That it would end in the utter ruin of their church and nation, as Moses had foretold. This is three times mentioned here. Your enemies will vex you *until you perish from off this good land*, v. 13. Again, "God will plague you *until he have destroyed you from off this good land*", v. 15. Heaven and earth will concur to root you out, so that (v. 16) *you shall perish from off the good land.*" It will aggravate their perdition that the land from which they shall perish is a good land, and a land which God himself had given them, and which therefore he would have secured to them if they by their wickedness had not thrown themselves out of it. Thus the goodness of the heavenly Canaan, and the free and sure grant God has made of it, will aggravate the misery of those that shall for ever be shut out and perish from it. Nothing will make them see how wretched they are so much as to see how happy they might have been. Joshua thus sets before them the fatal consequences of their apostasy, that, *knowing the terror of the Lord*, they might be persuaded *with purpose of heart to cleave to him*.

Chapter 24

This chapter concludes the life and reign of Joshua, in which we have, I. The great care and pains he took to confirm the people of Israel in the true faith and worship of God, that they might, after his death, persevere therein. In order to this he called another general assembly of the heads of the congregation of Israel (v. 1) and dealt with them. 1. By way of narrative, recounting the great things God had done for them and their fathers (v. 2–13). 2. By way of charge to them, in consideration thereof, to serve God (v. 14). 3. By way of treaty with them, wherein he aims to bring them, (1.) To make religion their deliberate choice; and they did so, with reasons for their choice (v. 15–18). (2.) To make it their determinate choice, and to resolve to adhere to it (v. 19–24). 4. By way of covenant upon that treaty (v. 25–28). II. The conclusion of this history, with, 1. The death and burial of Joshua (v. 29, 30) and Eleazar (v. 33), and the mention of the burial of Joseph's bones upon that occasion (v. 32). 2. A general account of the state of Israel at that time (v. 31).

Verses 1-14

Joshua thought he had taken his last farewell of Israel in the solemn charge he gave them in the foregoing chapter, when he said, *I go the way of all the earth*; but God graciously continuing his life longer than expected, and renewing his strength, he was desirous to improve it for the good of Israel. He did not say, "I have taken my leave of them once, and let that serve;" but, having yet a longer space given him, he summons them together again, that he might try what more he could do to engage them for God. Note, We must never think our work for God done till our life is done; and, if he lengthen out our days beyond what we thought, we must conclude it is because he has some further service for us to do.

The assembly is the same with that in the foregoing chapter, the *elders, heads, judges, and officers of Israel*, v. 1. But it is here made somewhat more solemn than it was there.

I. The place appointed for their meeting is *Shechem*, not only because that lay nearer to Joshua than Shiloh, and therefore more convenient now that he was infirm and unfit for travelling, but because it was the place where Abraham, the first trustee of God's covenant with this people, settled at his coming to Canaan, and where God appeared to him (Gen. 12:6, 7), and near which stood mounts Gerizim and Ebal, where the people had renewed their covenant with God at their first coming into Canaan, Jos. 8:30. Of the promises God had made to their fathers, and of the promises they themselves had made to God, this place might serve to put them in mind.

II. They presented themselves not only before Joshua, but before God, in this assembly, that is, they came together in a solemn religious manner, as into the special presence of God, and with an eye to his speaking to them by Joshua; and it is probable the service began with prayer. It is the conjecture of interpreters that upon this great occasion Joshua ordered the ark of God to be brought by the priests to Shechem, which, they say, was about ten miles from Shiloh, and to be set down in the place of their meeting, which is therefore called (v. 26) *the sanctuary of the Lord*, the presence of the ark making it so at that time; and this was done to grace the solemnity, and to strike an awe upon the people that attended. We have not now any such sensible tokens of the divine presence, but are to believe that *where two or three are gathered together* in Christ's name he is as really

in the midst of them as God was where the ark was, and they are indeed presenting themselves before him.

III. Joshua spoke to them in God's name, and as from him, in the language of a prophet (v. 2): "*Thus saith the Lord, Jehovah, the great God, and the God of Israel, your God in covenant, whom therefore you are bound to hear and give heed to.*" Note, The word of God is to be received by us as his, whoever is the messenger that brings it, whose greatness cannot add to it, nor his meanness diminish from it. His sermon consists of doctrine and application.

1. The doctrinal part is a history of the great things God had done for his people, and for their fathers before them. God by Joshua recounts the marvels of old: "I did so and so." They must know and consider, not only that such and such things were done, but that God did them. It is a series of wonders that is here recorded, and perhaps many more were mentioned by Joshua, which for brevity's sake are here omitted. See what God had wrought. (1.) He brought Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees, v. 2, 3. He and his ancestors had served other gods there, for it was the country in which, though celebrated for learning, idolatry, as some think, had its rise; there *the world by wisdom knew not God*. Abraham, who afterwards was the friend of God and the great favourite of heaven, was bred up in idolatry, and lived long in it, till God by his grace snatched him as a brand out of that burning. Let them remember that rock out of which they were hewn, and not relapse into that sin from which their fathers by a miracle of free grace were delivered. "I took him," says God, "else he had never come out of that sinful state." Hence Abraham's justification is made by the apostle an instance of God's *justifying the ungodly*, Rom. 4:5. (2.) He brought him to Canaan, and built up his family, led him through the land to Shechem, where they now were, multiplied his seed by Ishmael, who begat twelve princes, but at last gave him Isaac the promised son, and in him multiplied his seed. When Isaac had two sons, Jacob and Esau, God provided an inheritance for Esau elsewhere in Mount Seir, that the land of Canaan might be reserved entire for the seed of Jacob, and the posterity of Esau might not pretend to a share in it. (3.) He delivered the seed of Jacob out of Egypt with a high hand (v. 5, 6), and rescued them out of the hands of Pharaoh and his host at the Red Sea, v. 6, 7. The same waters were the Israelites' guard and the Egyptians' grave, and this in answer to prayer; for, though we find in the story that they in that distress murmured against God (Ex. 14:11, 12), notice is here taken of their *crying to God*; he graciously accepted those that prayed to him, and overlooked the folly of those that quarrelled with him. (4.) He protected them in the wilderness, where they are here said, not to *wander*, but to *dwell for a long season*, v. 7. So wisely were all their motions directed, and so safely were they kept, that even there they had as certain a dwelling-place as if they had been in a walled city. (5.) He gave them the land of the Amorites, on the other side Jordan (v. 8), and there defeated the plot of Balak and Balaam against them, so that Balaam could not curse them as he desired, and therefore Balak durst not fight them as he designed, and as, because he designed it, he is here said to have done it. The turning of Balaam's tongue to bless Israel, when he intended to curse them, is often mentioned as an instance of the divine power put forth in Israel's favour as remarkable as any, because in it God proved (and does still, more than we are aware of) his dominion over the powers of darkness, and over the spirits of men. (6.) He brought them safely and triumphantly into Canaan, delivered the Canaanites into their hand (v. 11), *sent hornets before them*, when they were actually engaged in battle with the enemy, which with their stings tormented them and with their noise terrified them, so that they became a very easy prey to Israel. These dreadful swarms first appeared in their war with Sihon and

Og, the two kings of the Amorites, and afterwards in their other battles, v. 12. God had promised to do this for them, Ex. 23:27, 28. And here Joshua takes notice of the fulfilling of that promise. See Ex. 23:27, 28; Deu. 7:20. These hornets, it should seem, annoyed the enemy more than the artillery of Israel, and therefore he adds, *not with thy sword nor bow*. It was purely the Lord's doing. *Lastly*, They were now in the peaceable possession of a good land, and lived comfortably upon the fruit of other people's labours, v. 13.

2. The application of this history of God's mercies to them is by way of exhortation to fear and serve God, in gratitude for his favour, and that it might be continued to them, v. 14. Now therefore, in consideration of all this, (1.) "*Fear the Lord*, the Lord and his goodness, Hos. 3:5. Reverence a God of such infinite power, fear to offend him and to forfeit his goodness, keep up an awe of his majesty, a deference to his authority, a dread of his displeasure, and a continual regard to his all-seeing eye upon you." (2.) "Let your practice be consonant to this principle, and serve him both by the outward acts of religious worship and every instance of obedience in your whole conversation, and this *in sincerity and truth*, with a single eye and an upright heart, and inward impressions answerable to outward expressions." This is the *truth in the inward part*, which God requires, Ps. 51:6. For what good will it do us to dissemble with a God that searches the heart? (3.) *Put away the strange gods*, both Chaldean and Egyptian idols, for those they were most in danger of revolting to. It should seem by this charge, which is repeated (v. 23), that there were some among them that privately kept in their closets the images or pictures of these dunghill-deities, which came to their hands from their ancestors, as heir-looms of their families, though, it may be, they did not worship them; these Joshua earnestly urges them to throw away: "Deface them, destroy them, lest you be tempted to serve them." Jacob pressed his household to do this, and at this very place; for, when they gave him up the little images they had, he buried them *under the oak which was by Shechem*, Gen. 35:2, 4. Perhaps the oak mentioned here (v. 26) was the same oak, or another in the same place, which might be well called the *oak of reformation*, as there were idolatrous oaks.

Verses 15-28

Never was any treaty carried on with better management, nor brought to a better issue, than this of Joshua with the people, to engage them to serve God. The manner of his dealing with them shows him to have been in earnest, and that his heart was much upon it, to leave them under all possible obligations to cleave to him, particularly the obligation of a choice and of a covenant.

I. Would it be any obligation upon them if they made the service of God their choice?—he here puts them to their choice, not as if it were antecedently indifferent whether they served God or nor, or as if they were at liberty to refuse his service, but because it would have a great influence upon their perseverance in religion if they embraced it with the reason of men and with the resolution of men. These two things he here brings them to.

1. He brings them to embrace their religion rationally and intelligently, for it is a reasonable service. The will of man is apt to glory in its native liberty, and, in a jealousy for the honour of this, adheres with most pleasure to that which is its own choice and is not imposed upon it; therefore it is God's will that this service should be, not our chance, or a force upon us, but our choice. Accordingly,

(1.) Joshua fairly puts the matter to their choice, v. 15. Here, [1.] He proposes the candidates that stand for the election. The Lord, Jehovah, on one side, and on the other side either the gods of their ancestors, which would pretend to recommend themselves to those that were fond of antiquity, and that which was received by tradition from their fathers, or the *gods of their neighbours*, the Amorites, in *whose land they dwelt*, which would insinuate themselves into the affections of those that were complaisant and fond of good fellowship. [2.] He supposes there were those to whom, upon some account or other, it would *seem evil to serve the Lord*. There are prejudices and objections which some people raise against religion, which, with those that are inclined to the world and the flesh, have great force. It seems evil to them, hard and unreasonable, to be obliged to deny themselves, mortify the flesh, take up their cross, etc. But, being in a state of probation, it is fit there should be some difficulties in the way, else there were no trial. [3.] He refers it to themselves: "*Choose you whom you will serve, choose this day, now that the matter is laid thus plainly before you, speedily bring it to a head, and do not stand hesitating.*" Elijah, long after this, referred the decision of the controversy between Jehovah and Baal to the consciences of those with whom he was treating, 1 Ki. 18:21. Joshua's putting the matter here to this issue plainly intimates two things:—*First*, That it is the will of God we should every one of us make religion our serious and deliberate choice. Let us state the matter impartially to ourselves, weigh things in an even balance, and then determine for that which we find to be really true and good. Let us resolve upon a life of serious godliness, not merely because we know no other way, but because really, upon search, we find no better. *Secondly*, That religion has so much self-evident reason and righteousness on its side that it may safely be referred to every man that allows himself a free thought either to choose or refuse it; for the merits of the cause are so plain that no considerate man can do otherwise but choose it. The case is so clear that it determines itself. Perhaps Joshua designed, by putting them to their choice, thus to try if there were any among them who, upon so fair an occasion given, would show a coolness and indifference towards the service of God, whether they would desire time to consider and consult their friends before they gave in an answer, and if any such should appear he might set a mark upon them, and warn the rest to avoid them. [4.] He directs their choice in this matter by an open declaration of his own resolutions: "*But as for me and my house, whatever you do, we will serve the Lord, and I hope you will all be of the same mind.*" Here he resolves, *First*, For himself: *As for me, I will serve the Lord*. Note, The service of God is nothing below the greatest of men; it is so far from being a diminution and disparagement to princes and those of the first rank to be religious that it is their greatest honour, and adds the brightest crown of glory to them. Observe how positive he is: "I will serve God." It is no abridgment of our liberty to bind ourselves with a bond to God. *Secondly*, For *his house*, that is, his family, his children and servants, such as were immediately under his eye and care, his inspection and influence. Joshua was a ruler, a judge in Israel, yet he did not make his necessary application to public affairs an excuse for the neglect of family religion. Those that have the charge of many families, as magistrates and ministers, must take special care of their own (1 Tim. 3:4, 5): *I and my house will serve God*. 1. "Not my house, without me." He would not engage them to that work which he would not set his own hand to. As some who would have their children and servants good, but will not be so themselves; that is, they would have them go to heaven, but intend to go to hell themselves. 2. "Not I, without my house." He supposes he might be forsaken by his people, but in his house, where his authority was greater and

more immediate, there he would over-rule. Note, When we cannot bring as many as we would to the service of God we must bring as many as we can, and extend our endeavours to the utmost sphere of our activity; if we cannot reform the land, let us put away iniquity far from our own tabernacle. 3. "First I, and then my house." Note, Those that lead and rule in other things should be first in the service of God, and go before in the best things. *Thirdly*, He resolves to do this whatever others did.

Though all the families of Israel should revolt from God, and serve idols, yet Joshua and his family will steadfastly adhere to the God of Israel. Note, Those that resolve to serve God must not mind being singular in it, nor be drawn by the crowd to forsake his service. Those that are bound for heaven must be willing to swim against the stream, and must not do as the most do, but as the best do.

(2.) The matter being thus put to their choice, they immediately determine it by a free, rational, and intelligent declaration, for the God of Israel, against all competitors whatsoever, v. 16–18. Here, [1.] They concur with Joshua in his resolution, being influenced by the example of so great a man, who had been so great a blessing to them (v. 18): *We also will serve the Lord*. See how much good great men might do, if they were but zealous in religion, by their influence on their inferiors. [2.] They startle at the thought of apostatizing from God (v. 16): *God forbid*; the word intimates the greatest dread and detestation imaginable. "Far be it, far be it from us, that we or ours should ever *forsake the Lord to serve other gods*. We must be perfectly lost to all sense of justice, gratitude, and honour, ere we can harbour the least thought of such a thing." Thus must our hearts rise against all temptations to desert the service of God. *Get thee behind me, Satan*. [3.] They give very substantial reasons for their choice, to show that they did not make it purely in compliance to Joshua, but from a full conviction of the reasonableness and equity of it. They make this choice for, and in consideration, *First*, Of the many great and very kind things God had done for them, bringing them out of Egypt through the wilderness into Canaan, v. 17, 18. Thus they repeat to themselves Joshua's sermon, and then express their sincere compliance with the intentions of it. *Secondly*, Of the relation they stood in to God, and his covenant with them: "*We will serve the Lord* (v. 18), *for he is our God*, who has graciously engaged himself by promise to us, and to whom we have by solemn vow engaged ourselves."

2. He brings them to embrace their religion resolutely, and to express a full purpose of heart to cleave to the Lord. Now that he has them in a good mind he follows his blow, and drives the nail to the head, that it might, if possible, be a nail in a sure place. Fast bind, fast find.

(1.) In order to this he sets before them the difficulties of religion, and that in it which might be thought discouraging (v. 19, 20): *You cannot serve the Lord, for he is a holy God*, or, as it is in the Hebrew, *he is the holy Gods*, intimating the mystery of the Trinity, three in one; *holy, holy, holy*, holy Father, holy Son, holy Spirit. *He will not forgive. And, if you forsake him, he will do you hurt*. Certainly Joshua does not intend hereby to deter them from the service of God as impracticable and dangerous. But, [1.] He perhaps intends to represent here the suggestions of seducers, who tempted Israel from their God, and from the service of him; with such insinuations as these, that he was a hard master, his work impossible to be done, and he not to be pleased, and, if displeased, implacable and revengeful,—that he would confine their respects to himself only, and would not suffer them to show the least kindness for any other,—and that herein he was very unlike the gods of the nations, which

were easy, and neither holy nor jealous. It is probable that this was then commonly objected against the Jewish religion, as it has all along been the artifice of Satan every since he tempted our first parents thus to misrepresent God and his laws, as harsh and severe; and Joshua by his tone and manner of speaking might make them perceive he intended it as an objection, and would put it to them how they would keep their ground against the force of it. Or, [2.] He thus expresses his godly jealousy over them, and his fear concerning them, that, notwithstanding the profession they now made of zeal for God and his service, they would afterwards draw back, and if they did they would find him just and jealous to avenge it. Or, [3.] He resolves to let them know the worst of it, and what strict terms they must expect to stand upon with God, that they might sit down and count the cost. "*You cannot serve the Lord*, except you put away all other gods for he is holy and jealous, and will by no means admit a rival, and therefore you must be very watchful and careful, for it is at your peril if you desert his service; better you had never known it." Thus, though our Master has assured us that *his yoke is easy*, yet lest, upon the presumption of this, we should grow remiss and careless, he has also told us that the gate is strait, and the way narrow, that leads to life, that we may therefore strive to enter, and not seek only. "*You cannot serve God and Mammon*; therefore, if you resolve to serve God, you must renounce all competitors with him. You cannot serve God in your own strength, nor will he forgive your transgressions for any righteousness of your own; but *all the seed of Israel must be justified and must glory in the Lord alone as their righteousness and strength*," Isa. 45:24, 25. They must therefore come off from all confidence in their own sufficiency, else their purposes would be to no purpose. Or, [4.] Joshua thus urges on them the seeming discouragements which lay in their way, that he might sharpen their resolutions, and draw from them a promise yet more express and solemn that they would continue faithful to God and their religion. He draws it from them that they might catch at it the more earnestly and hold it the faster.

(2.) Notwithstanding this statement of the difficulties of religion, they declare a firm and fixed resolution to continue and persevere therein (v. 21): "*Nay, but we will serve the Lord*. We will think never the worse of him for his being a holy and jealous God, nor for his confining his servants to worship himself only. Justly will he consume those that forsake him, but we never will forsake him; not only we have a good mind to serve him, and we hope we shall, but we are at a point, we cannot bear to hear any *entreaties to leave him or to turn from following after him* (Ruth 1:16); in the strength of divine grace we are resolved that we will serve the Lord." This resolution they repeat with an explication (v. 24): "*The Lord our God will we serve*, not only be called his servants and wear his livery, but our religion shall rule us in every thing, *and his voice will we obey*." And in vain do we *call him Master and Lord, if we do not the things which he saith*, Lu. 6:46. This last promise they make in answer to the charge Joshua gave them (v. 23), that, in order to their perseverance, they should, [1.] Put away the images and relics of the strange gods, and not keep any of the tokens of those other lovers in their custody, if they resolved their *Maker should be their husband*; they promise, in this, to obey his voice. [2.] That they should *incline their hearts to the God of Israel*, use their authority over their own hearts to engage them for God, not only to set their affections upon him, but to settle them so. These terms they agree to, and thus, as Joshua explains the bargain, they strike it: *The Lord our God will we serve*.

II. The service of God being thus made their deliberate choice, Joshua binds them to it by a solemn covenant, v. 25. Moses had twice publicly ratified this covenant between God and Israel, at Mount Sinai (Ex. 24) and in the plains of Moab, Deu. 29:1.

Joshua had likewise done it once (ch. 8:31, etc.) and now the second time. It is here called a *statute* and an *ordinance*, because of the strength and perpetuity of its obligation, and because even this covenant bound them to no more than what they were antecedently bound to by the divine command. Now, to give it the formalities of a covenant, 1. He calls witnesses, no other than themselves (v. 22): *You are witnesses that you have chosen the Lord*. He promises himself that they would never forget the solemnities of this day; but, if hereafter they should break this covenant, he assures them that the professions and promises they had now made would certainly rise up in judgment against them and condemn them; and they agreed to it: *"We are witnesses; let us be judged out of our own mouths if ever we be false to our God."* 2. He put it in writing, and inserted it, as we find it here, in the sacred canon: He *wrote it in the book of the law* (v. 26), in that original which was laid up in the side of the ark, and thence, probably, it was transcribed into the several copies which the princes had for the use of each tribe. There it was written, that their obligation to religion by the divine precept, and that by their own promise, might remain on record together. 3. He erected a memorandum of it, for the benefit of those who perhaps were not conversant with writings, v. 26, 27. He *set up a great stone under an oak*, as a monument of this covenant, and perhaps wrote an inscription upon it (by which stones are made to speak) signifying the intention of it. When he says, *It hath heard* what was past, he tacitly upbraids the people with the hardness of their hearts, as if this stone had heard to as good purpose as some of them; and, if they should forget what was no done, this stone would so far preserve the remembrance of it as to reproach them for their stupidity and carelessness, and be a witness against them.

The matter being thus settled, Joshua dismissed this assembly of the grandees of Israel (v. 28), and took his last leave of them, well satisfied in having done his part, by which he had delivered his soul; if they perished, their blood would be upon their own heads.

Verses 29-33

This book, which began with triumphs, here ends with funerals, by which all the glory of man is stained. We have here 1. The burial of Joseph, v. 32. He died about 200 years before in Egypt, but *gave commandment concerning his bones*, that they should not rest in their grave until Israel had rest in the land of promise; now therefore the children of Israel, who had brought this coffin full of bones with them out of Egypt, carried it along with them in all their marches through the wilderness (the two tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, it is probable, taking particular care of it), and kept it in their camp till Canaan was perfectly reduced, now at last they deposited it in that piece of ground which his father gave him near Shechem, Gen. 48:22. Probably it was upon this occasion that Joshua called for all Israel to meet him at Shechem (v. 1), to attend Joseph's coffin to the grave there, so that the sermon in this chapter served both for Joseph's funeral sermon and his own farewell sermon; and if it was, as is supposed, in the last year of his life, the occasion might very well remind him of his own death being at hand, for he was not just at the same age that his illustrious ancestor Joseph had arrived at when he died, *110 years old*; compare v. 29 with Gen. 50:26. 2. The death and burial of Joshua, v. 29, 30. We are not told how long he lived after the coming of Israel into Canaan. Dr. Lightfoot thinks it was about seventeen years; but the Jewish chronologers generally say it was about twenty-seven or twenty-eight years. He is here called the *servant of the Lord*, the same title that was given to Moses (ch. 1:1) when mention

was made of his death; for, though Joshua was in many respects inferior to Moses, yet in this he was equal to him, that, according as his work was, he approved himself a diligent and faithful servant of God. And he that traded with his two talents had the same approbation that he had who traded with his five. *Well done, good and faithful servant.* Joshua's burying-place is here said to be *on the north side of the hill Gaash, or the quaking hill;* the Jews say it was so called because it trembled at the burial of Joshua, to upbraid the people of Israel with their stupidity in that they did not lament the death of that great and good man as they ought to have done. Thus at the death of Christ, our Joshua, the earth quaked. The learned bishop Patrick observes that there is no mention of any days of mourning being observed for Joshua, as there were for Moses and Aaron, in which, he says, St. Hierom and others of the fathers think there is a mystery, namely, that under the law, when life and immortality were not brought to so clear a light as they are now, they had reason to mourn and weep for the death of their friends; but now that Jesus, our Joshua, has opened the kingdom of heaven, we may rather rejoice. 3. The death and burial of Eleazar the chief priest, who, it is probable, died about the same time that Joshua did, as Aaron in the same year with Moses, v. 33. The Jews say that Eleazar, a little before he died, called the elders together, and gave them a charge as Joshua had done. He was buried in a hill that pertained to Phinehas his son, which came to him, not by descent, for then it would have pertained to his father first, nor had the priests any cities in Mount Ephraim, but either it fell to him by marriage, as the Jews conjecture, or it was freely bestowed upon him, to build a country seat on, by some pious Israelite that was well-affected to the priesthood, for it is here said to have been *given him;* and there he buried his dear father. 4. A general idea given us of the state of Israel at this time, v. 31. While Joshua lived, religion was kept up among them under his care and influence; but soon after he and his contemporaries died it went to decay, so much oftentimes does one head hold up: how well is it for the gospel church that Christ, our Joshua, is still with it, by his Spirit, and will be always, even *unto the end of the world!*