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Preface

This prophet was colleague with the prophet Haggai, and a worker together with him in forwarding the building of the second temple (Ezra 5:1); for two are better than one. Christ sent forth his disciples two and two. Zechariah began to prophesy some time after Haggai. But he continued longer, soared higher in visions and revelations, wrote more, and prophesied more particularly concerning Christ, than Haggai had done; so *the last shall be first*: the last in time sometimes proves first in dignity. He begins with a plain practical sermon, expressive of that which was the scope of his prophesying, in the first five verses; but afterwards, to the end of ch. 6, he relates the visions he saw, and the instructions he received immediately from heaven by them. At ch. 7, from an enquiry made by the Jews concerning fasting, he takes occasion to show them the duty of their present day, and to encourage them to hope for God's favour, to the end of ch. 8, after which there are two sermons, which are both called *burdens of the word of the Lord* (one begins with ch. 9, the other with ch. 12), which probably were preached some time after; the scope of them is to reprove for sin, and threaten God's judgments against the impenitent, and to encourage those that feared God with assurances of the mercy God had in store for his church, and especially of the coming of the Messiah and the setting up of his kingdom in the world.

Chapter 1

In this chapter, after the introduction (v. 1), we have, I. An awakening call to a sinful people to repent of their sins and return to God (v. 2-6). II. Great encouragement given to hope for mercy. 1. By the vision of the horses (v. 7-11). 2. By the prayer of the angel for Jerusalem, and the answer to that prayer (v. 12-17). 3. By the vision of the four carpenters that were employed to cut off the four horns with which Judah and Jerusalem were scattered (v. 18-21).

Verses 1-6

Here is, I. The foundation of Zechariah's ministry; it is laid in a divine authority: *The word of the Lord came to him*. He received a divine commission to be God's mouth to the people and with it instructions what to say. He received of the Lord that which also he delivered unto them. *The word of the Lord was to him*; it came in the evidence and demonstration of the Spirit, as a real thing, and not a fancy. For the ascertaining of this, we have here, 1. The time when the word of the Lord came first to him, or when the word that next follows came to him: it was *in the second year of Darius*. Before the captivity the prophets dated their writings by the reigns of the kings of Judah and Israel; but now by the reigns of the kings of Persia, to whom they were subjects. Such a melancholy change had sin made of their circumstances. Zerubbabel took not so much state upon him as to have public acts dated by the years of his government, and in things of this nature the prophets, as is fit, complied with the usage of the time, and scrupled not to reckon by the years of the heathen kings, as Dan. 7:1; 8:1. Zechariah preached his first sermon in the *eighth month* of this *second year* of Darius; Haggai preached his in the sixth month of the same year, Hag. 1:1. The people being readily obedient to the word of the Lord in the mouth of Haggai, God blessed them with another prophet; for to him that has, and uses well what he has, more shall be given. 2. The name and family of the prophet to whom the word of the Lord came; He was *Zechariah, the son of Barachiah, the son of Iddo*, and he was *the prophet*, as Haggai is called *the prophet*, Hag. 1:1. For, though in former ages there was one Iddo a prophet (2 Chr. 12:15), yet we have no reason to think that Zechariah was of his progeny, or should be denominated from him. The learned Mr. Pemble is decidedly of opinion that this Zechariah, the son of Barachiah, is the same that our Saviour says was *slain between the temple and the altar*, perhaps many years after the rebuilding of the temple (Mt. 23:35), and that our Saviour does not mean (as is commonly thought) Zechariah the son of Jehoiada, for why should Jehoiada be called Barachiah? And he thinks the manner of Christ's account persuades us to think so; for, reckoning up the innocent blood shed by the Jews, he begins at Abel, and ends even in the last of the holy prophets. Whereas, after Zechariah the son of Jehoiada, many prophets and righteous men were put to death by them. It is true there is no mention made in any history of their slaying this Zechariah, but Josephus might industriously conceal that shame of his nation. Perhaps what Zechariah spoke in his prophesying concerning Christ of his being sold, his being wounded in the house of his friends, and the shepherd being smitten, was verified in the prophet himself, and so he became a type of Christ. Probably, being assaulted by his persecutors, he took sanctuary in the court of the priests (and some think he was himself a priest), and so was slain between the porch and the altar.

II. The first-fruits of Zechariah's ministry. Before he came to visions and revelations, and delivered his prophetic discourses, he

preached that which was plain and practical; for it is best to begin with that. Before he published the promises of mercy, he published calls to repentance, for thus *the way of the Lord* must be *prepared*. Law must be first preached, and then gospel. Now,

1. The prophet here puts them in mind of the controversy God had had with their fathers (v. 2): "*The Lord has been sorely displeased with your fathers*, and has laid them under the tokens of his displeasure. You have heard with your ears, and your fathers have told you of it; you have seen with your eyes the woeful remains of it. God's quarrel with you has been of long standing, and therefore it is time for you to think of taking it up." Note, The judgments of God, which those that went before us were under, should be taken as warnings to us not to tread in their steps, and calls to repentance, that we may cut off the entail of the curse and get it turned into a blessing.

2. He calls them, in God's name, to return to him, and make their peace with him, v. 3. God by him says that to this backsliding people which he had often said by his servants the prophets: "*Turn you to me* in a way of faith and repentance, duty and obedience, and *I will turn to you* in a way of favour and mercy, peace and reconciliation." Let the rebels return to their allegiance, and they shall be taken under the protection of the government and enjoy all the privileges of good subjects. Let them change their way, and God will change his. See Mal. 3:7. But that which is most observable here is that God is called here the *Lord of hosts* three times: "*Thus saith the Lord of hosts*. It is he that speaks, and therefore you are bound to regard what he says." *Turn you to me, saith the Lord of hosts* (this intimates the authority and obligation of the command), and *I will turn to you, saith the Lord of hosts*—this intimates the validity and value of the promise; so that it is no vain repetition. Note, The consideration of God's almighty power and sovereign dominion should both engage and encourage sinners to repent and turn to him. It is very desirable to have the Lord of hosts our friend and very dreadful to have him our enemy.

3. He warns them not to persist in their impenitence, as their fathers had done (v. 4): *Be you not as your fathers*. Instead of being hardened in their evil courses by the example of their fathers' sins, let them rather be deterred from them by the example of their fathers' punishment. We are apt to be governed very much by precedent, and we are well or ill governed according to the use we make of the precedents before us. The same examples to some are a savour of life unto life, to others a savour of death unto death. Some argued, "Shall we be wiser than our fathers? They never minded the prophets, and why then should we mind them? They made laws against them, and why should we tolerate them?" But they are here taught how they should argue: "Our fathers slighted the prophets, and God was sorely displeased with them for it; therefore let us the more carefully regard what God says to us by his prophets." "Review what is past, and observe,"

(1.) "What was the message that God sent by his servants the prophets to your fathers: *The former prophets cried to your fathers*. cried aloud, and did not spare, not spare themselves, not spare your fathers; they cried as men in earnest, as men that would be heard; they spoke not as from themselves, but in the name of *the Lord of hosts*; and this was the substance of what they said, the burden of every song, the application of every sermon—*Turn you now from your evil ways, and from your evil doings*; the very same that we now preach to you. Be persuaded to leave your sins; resolve to have no more to do with them. A speedy reformation is the only way to prevent an approaching ruin: *Turn you now* from sin to God without delay."

(2.) "How little this message was regarded by your fathers: *But they did not hear, they did not heed. They turned a deaf ear to these calls: They would not hearken unto me, saith the Lord.* They would not be reclaimed, would not be ruled, by the word I sent them; say not then that you will do as your fathers did, for they did amiss;" see Jer. 44:17. Note, We must not follow the examples of our dear fathers unless they were God's dear children, nor any further than they were dutiful and obedient to him.

(3.) "What has become both of your fathers and of the prophets that preached to them? They are all dead and gone," v. 5. [1.] *Your fathers, where are they?* The whole generation of them is swept away, and their place knows them no more. Note, When we think of our ancestors, that have gone through the world and gone out of it before us, we should think, *Where are they?* Here they were, in the towns and countries where we live, passing and repassing in the same streets, dwelling in the same houses, trading in the same shops and exchanges, worshipping God in the same churches. But where are they? They are somewhere still; when they died there was not an end of them. They are in eternity, in the world of spirits, the unchangeable world, to which we are hastening apace. Where are they? Those of them that lived and died in sin are in torment, and we are warned by Moses and the prophets, Christ and his apostles, to look to it that we *come not to that place of torment*, Lu. 16:28, 29. Those of them that lived and died in Christ are in paradise; and, if we live and die as they did, we shall be with them shortly, with them eternally. [2.] *The prophets also, did they live for ever?* No, they are gone too. The treasure is put into earthen vessels, the water of life into earthen pitchers, often cracked, and brought home broken at last. Christ is a prophet that lives for ever, but all other prophets have a period put to their office. Note, Ministers are dying men, and live not for ever in this world. They are to look upon themselves as such, and to preach accordingly, as those that must be silenced shortly, and know not which sermon may be the last. People are to look upon them as such, and to hear accordingly, as those that yet a little while have the *light with them*, that they may walk and work *while they have the light*. Oh that this weighty consideration had its due weight given it, that we are dying ministers dealing with dying people about the concerns of immortal souls and an awful eternity, which both they and we are standing upon the brink of! It concerns us to think of the prophets that are gone, that were *before us of old*, Jer. 28:8. Those that were the glory of men withered and fell; but the *word of the Lord endures for ever*, 1 Pt. 1:24, 25. The prophets that are now, do *we live for ever?* (so some read it); no, Haggai and Zechariah will not be long with you, and prophecy itself shall shortly cease. In another world both we and our prophets shall live for ever; and to prepare for that world ought to be our great care and business in this.

(4.) "What were the effects of the word which God spoke to them by his prophets, v. 6. The preachers died, and the hearers died, but the word of God died not; that took effect, and not one iota or tittle of it fell to the ground." As the *rain and snow* from heaven, *it shall not return void*, Isa. 55:11. He appealed to themselves; they knew very well, [1.] That the judgments God had threatened were executed upon their fathers, and they were made to feel what they would not believe and fear: "*My statutes which I commanded my servants the prophets, the precepts with the penalties annexed, which I charged them with the delivery of, did they not take hold of your fathers?*" Though God's prophets could not fasten convictions upon them, the calamities threatened overtook them, and they could not escape them, nor get out of the reach of them. God's words took hold of them as the bailiff arrests the debtor, and takes him in execution for contempt. Note, The unbelief of man cannot make the

threatenings of God's word of no effect, but, sooner or later, they will take place, if the prescribed course be not taken to prevent the execution of them. God's anger will certainly take hold of those that will not be taken hold of by his authority; for when he judges he will overcome. [2.] That they themselves could not but own the accomplishment of the word of God in the judgments of God that were upon them, and that therein he was righteous, and had done them no wrong: *They returned, and said* (they changed their mind, and when it was too late to prevent the ruin of their nation they acknowledged), *Like as the Lord of hosts thought to do unto us according to our ways and doings, to reckon with us for them, so has he dealt with us*, and we must acknowledge both his truth and his justice, must blame ourselves only, and have no blame to lay to him. *Sero sapiunt Phryges—It is late before the Phrygians become wise*. This after-wit, as it is a proof of the truth of God, so it is a proof of the folly of men, who will look no further than they can see. They would never be persuaded to say in time, "God will be as good as his word, for he is faithful; he will deal with us according to our deserts, for he is righteous." But now they see both plainly enough when the sentence is executed; now he that runs may read, and publish the exact agreement that appears between the present providences and the former predictions which then were slighted, between the present punishments and the former sins which then were persisted in. Now they cannot but say, *The Lord is righteous*, Dan. 9:11–13.

Verses 7-17

We not come to visions and revelations of the Lord; for in that way God chose to speak by Zechariah, to awaken the people's attention, and to engage their humble reverence of the word and their humble enquiries into it, and to fix it the more in their minds and memories. Most of the following visions seem designed for the comfort of the Jews, now newly returned out of captivity, and their encouragement to go on with the building of the temple. The scope of this vision (which is as an introduction to the rest) is to assure the Jews of the care God took of them, and the eye of his providence that was upon them for good, now in their present state, when they seem to be deserted, and their case deplorable. The vision is dated (v. 7) *the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month*, three months after he preached that sermon (v. 1), in which he calls them to repentance from the consideration of God's judgments. Finding that that sermon had a good effect, and that they returned to God in a way of duty, the assurances he had given them are confirmed, that God would return to them in a way of mercy. Now observe here,

I. What the prophet saw, and the explication of that. 1. He saw a grove of *myrtle-trees*, a dark shady grove, down *in a bottom*, hidden by the adjacent hills, so that you were not aware of it till you were just upon it. This represented the low, dark, solitary, melancholy condition of the Jewish church at this time. They were over-topped by all their neighbours, buried in obscurity; what friends they had were hidden, and there appeared no way of relief and succour for them. Note, The church has not been always visible, but sometimes hidden, as the *woman in the wilderness*, Rev. 12:6. 2. He saw a man mounted upon a *red horse*, standing in the midst of this shady myrtle-grove. This man is no other than the *man Christ Jesus*, the same that appeared to Joshua with *his sword drawn in his hand as captain of the host of the Lord* (Jos. 5:13, 14) and to John with his *bow and his crown*, Rev. 6:2. Though the church was in a low condition, yet Christ was present in the midst of it. Was it hidden by the hills? He was much more hidden in the myrtle-grove, yet hidden as in an ambush, ready to appear for the seasonable relief of

his people, to their happy surprise. Compare Isa. 45:15, *Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself*, and yet *Israel's God and Saviour* at the same time, their *Holy One in the midst of them*. He was *riding*, as a man of war, as a man in haste, *riding on the heavens for the help* of his people, Deu. 33:26. He rode on a *red horse*, either naturally so or dyed red with the blood of war, as this same victorious prince appeared *red in his apparel*, Isa. 63:1, 2. Red is a fiery colour, denoting that he is *jealous for Jerusalem* (v. 14) and very angry at her enemies. Christ, under the law, appeared on a red horse, denoting the terror of that dispensation, and that he had yet his conflict before him, when he was to *resist unto blood*. But, under the gospel, he appears on a *white horse* (Rev. 6:2. and again ch. 19:11), denoting that he has now gained the victory, and rides in triumph, and hangs out the white, not the bloody flag. 3. He saw a troop of horse attending him, ready to receive and obey his orders: *Behind him there were some red horses, and some speckled, and some white*, angels attending the Lord Jesus, ready to be employed by him for the service of his church, some in acts of judgment, others of mercy, others in mixed events. Note, The King of the church has angels at command, not only to do him honour, but to minister for the good of those that are his. 4. He enquired into the signification of this vision. He had an angel talking with him, as his instructor, besides those he saw in the vision; so had Ezekiel (ch. 40:3), and Daniel, ch. 8:16. Zechariah asked him (v. 9), *O my Lord! what are these?* And, it should seem this *angel that talked with him* was Christ himself, the *man on the red horse*, whom the rest were attendants on; to him immediately Zechariah addresses himself. Would we be acquainted with the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, we must make our application, not to angels (they are themselves learners), but to Christ himself, who is alone *able to take the book, and open the seals*, Rev. 5:7. The prophet's question implies a humble acknowledgment of his own ignorance and an earnest desire to be informed. O let me know what these are! This he desired, not for the satisfying of his curiosity, but that he might be furnished with something proper for the comfort and encouragement of the people of God, in their present distress. 5. He received from the *angel that talked with him* (v. 9), and from *the man that stood among the myrtle-trees* (v. 10), the interpretation of this vision. Note, Jesus Christ is ready to instruct those that are humbly desirous to be taught the things of God. He immediately said, *I will show thee what these are*. What knowledge we have, or may have, concerning the world of spirits, we are indebted to Christ for. The account given him was, *These are those whom the Lord has sent*: they are his messengers, his envoys, appointed (as his eyes are said to do, 2 Chr. 16:9) to *walk*, to *run*, to fly swiftly *through the earth*, to observe what is done in it and to execute the divine commands. God needs them not, but he is pleased to employ them, and we need the comfort arising from the doctrine of their administration.

II. What the prophet heard, and what instructions were thereby given him. Faith comes by hearing, and, generally, in visions there was something said.

1. He heard the report or representation which the angels made to Christ of the present state of the world, v. 11. They had been out abroad, as flying posts (*being hastened by the King of kings' commandment*, Esth. 3:15), and, having returned, they give this account to the *Angel that stood among the myrtle-trees* (for to the Lord Jesus angels themselves are accountable): *We have walked to and fro through the earth, and, behold all the earth sits still and is at rest*. We are taught to pray that the will of God may be done by men on earth as it is done by the angels in heaven; and here we see what need we have to pray so, for it is far

from being so. For, (1.) We find the world of angels here very busy. Those that are employed in the court above rest not day nor night from praising God, which is their business there; and those that are employed in the camp below are never idle, nor lose time; they are still *ascending and descending upon the Son of man* (Jn. 1:51, as on Jacob's ladder, Gen. 28:12); they are still *walking to and fro through the earth*. Thus active, thus industrious, *Satan* owns himself to be in doing mischief, Job 1:7. It is well for us that good angels bestir themselves as much to do good, and that here in this earth we have guardians going about continually seeking to do us a kindness, as we have adversaries which, as roaring lions, go about continually, seeking to devour us. Though holy angels in this earth meet with a great deal that is disagreeable, yet, while they are going on God's errands, they hesitate not to *walk to and fro through it*. Their own habitation, which those that fell liked not, they will like the better when they return. (2.) We find the world of mankind here very careless: *All the earth sits still, and is at rest*, while all the church is made uneasy, *tossed with tempests and not comforted*. Those that are strangers to the church are secure; those that are enemies to it are successful. The Chaldeans and Persians dwell at ease, while the poor Jews are continually alarmed; as when *the king and Haman sat down to drink, but the city Shushan was perplexed*. The children of men are merry and jovial, but *none grieve for the affliction* of God's children. Note, It is sad to think what a deep sleep the world is cast into, what a spirit of slumber has seized the generality of mankind, that are under God's wrath and Satan's power, and yet secure and unconcerned! They sit still and are at rest, Lu. 17:26, etc.

2. He heard Christ's intercession with the Father for his afflicted church, v. 12. The angels related the posture of affairs in this lower world, but we read not of any prayers they made for the redress of the grievances they had made a remonstrance of. No; it is *the Angel among the myrtle-trees* that is the great intercessor. Upon the report of the angels he immediately turned heavenward, and said, *Lord, wilt thou not have mercy on thy church?* (1.) The thing he intercedes for is *mercy*; as Ps. 85:7, *Show us thy mercy, O Lord!* Note, God's mercy is all in all to the church's comfort; and all his mercy must be hoped for through Christ's mediation. (2.) The thing he complains of is the delay of this mercy: *How long wilt thou not have mercy!* He knows that *mercies through him shall be built up for ever* (Ps. 89:2), but thinks it long that the building is deferred. (3.) The objects of compassion recommended to the divine mercies are, Jerusalem, the holy city, and the other cities of Judah that were now in ruins; for God had had *indignation against them now threescore and ten years*. He mentions seventy years because that was the time fixed in the divine councils for the continuance of the captivity; so long the indignation lasted, and though *now for a little space grace had been shown them from the Lord their God, to give them some reviving* (Ezra 9:8), yet the scars of those seventy years' captivity still remained so deep, so painful, that this is the melancholy string they still harp upon—the divine indignation during those seventy years. Dr. Lightfoot thinks that whereas the seventy years of the captivity were reckoned from Jehoiakim's fourth year, and ended in the first of Cyrus, these seventy years are to be computed from the eleventh of Zedekiah, when Jerusalem and the temple were burnt, about nineteen years after the first captivity, and which ended in this second year of Darius Hystaspes, about seventeen years after Cyrus's proclamation, as that seventy years mentioned ch. 7:5 was about nineteen years after; the captivity went off, as it came on, gradually. "Lord, we are still under the burden of the seventy years' wrath, *and wilt thou be angry with us for ever?*"

3. He heard a gracious reply given to this intercession of Christ's for his church; for it is a prevailing intercession, always acceptable, *and him the Father heareth always* (v. 13): *The Lord answered the angel*, this angel of the covenant, *with good words and comfortable words*, with promises of mercy and deliverance, and the perfecting of what he had begun in favour to them. These were comfortable words to Christ, who is grieved in the grievances of his church, and comfortable to all that mourn with Zion. God often answers prayer with good words, when he does not immediately appear in great works; and those good words are real answers to prayer. Men's good words will not feed the body (Jam. 2:16), but God's good words will feed the faith, for saying and doing with him are not two things, though they are with us.

4. He heard that reply which was given to the angel repeated to himself, with a commission to publish it to the children of his people, for their comfort. *The revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave to him he signified to his servant John*, and by him *to the churches*, Rev. 1:1, 4. Thus all the good words and comfortable words of the gospel we receive from Jesus Christ, as he received them from the Father, in answer to the prayer of his blood, and his ministers are appointed to preach them *to all the world*. Now that God would *speak comfortably to Jerusalem*, Zechariah is *the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare you the way of the Lord. The voice said, Cry. Cry then*. The prophets must now cry as loudly to show God's people their comforts as ever they did formerly to show them *their transgressions*, Isa. 40:2, 3, 6. And if he ask, *What shall I cry?* he is here instructed. (1.) He must proclaim the wrath God has in store for the enemies of Jerusalem. He is *jealous for Zion with great jealousy*, v. 14. He takes himself to be highly affronted by the injuries and indignities that are done to his church, as he had been formerly by the iniquities found in his church. The earth *sat still and was at rest* (v. 11), not relenting at all, nor showing the least remorse, for all the mischief they had done to Jerusalem, as Joseph's brethren, who, when they had sold him, sat down to eat bread; and this God took very ill (v. 15): *I am very sorely displeased with the heathen, that are at ease*, and have no concern for the afflicted church. Much more will he be displeased with those that are *at ease in Zion* (Amos 6:1), with Zion's own sons, that sympathize not with her in her sorrows. But this was not all; they were not only not concerned for her, but they were concerned against her: *I was but a little displeased* with my people, and designed to correct them moderately, but those that were employed as instruments of the correction cast off all pity, and with the greatest rage and malice *helped forward the affliction* and added to it, *persecuting those whom God had smitten* (Ps. 69:26) and insulting over those whom he had troubled. See Isa. 47:6; 10:5; Eze. 25:12, 15. Note, God is displeased with those who help forward the affliction even of such as suffer justly; for true humanity, in such a case, is good divinity. (2.) He must proclaim the mercy God has in store for Jerusalem and the *cities of Judah*, v. 16. He must cry, *"Thus saith the Lord, I have returned to Jerusalem with mercies. I was going away in wrath, but I am now returning in love. Cry yet to the same purport,"* v. 17. There must now be line upon line for consolation, as formerly there had been for conviction. *The Lord*, even the Lord of hosts, assures them, [1.] That the temple shall be built that is now but in the building. This good work which they are now about, though it meet with much discouragement, shall be perfected, and they shall have the tokens of God's presence, and opportunities of conversing with him, and worshipping him, as formerly. Note, It is good news indeed to any place to hear that God will build his house in it. [2.] That Jerusalem shall again be *built as a city compact together*, which had formerly been its glory, Ps. 122:3. *A line shall be*

stretched forth upon Jerusalem, in order to the rebuilding of it with great exactness and uniformity. [3.] That the nation shall again become populous and rich, though now diminished and impoverished. Not only Jerusalem, but other cities that are reduced and lie in a little compass, shall yet *spread abroad*, or be diffused; their suburbs shall extend far, and colonies shall be transplanted from them; and this *through prosperity*: they shall be so numerous, and so wealthy, that there shall not be room for them; they shall complain that *the place is too strait*, Isa. 49:20. As they had been scattered and spread abroad, through their calamities, so they should now be through their prosperity. *Let thy fountains be dispersed*, Prov. 5:16. The cities that should thus increase God calls his cities; they are *blessed* by him, and they are *fruitful and multiply, and replenish the land*. [4.] That all their present sorrows should not only be balanced, but for ever silenced, by divine consolations: *The Lord shall yet comfort Zion*. Yet at length, though her griefs and grievances may continue long, God has comforts in reserve for Zion and all her mourners. [5.] That all this will be the fruit of God's preventing distinguishing favour: He shall yet *choose Jerusalem*, shall renew his choice, renew his covenant, shall make it appear that he has chosen Jerusalem. As he first built them up into a people when he brought them out of Egypt, so he will now rebuild them, when he brings them out of Babylon, not for any worthiness of theirs, but in pursuance of his own choice, Deu. 7:7, 8. Jerusalem is the city he has chosen, and he will not cast it off.

Verses 18-21

It is the comfort and triumph of the church (Isa. 59:19) that *when the enemy shall come in like a flood*, with mighty force and fury, then the *Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him*. Now, in this vision (the second which this prophet had), we have an illustration of that, God's Spirit making a stand, and making head, against the formidable power of the church's adversaries.

I. We have here the enemies of the church bold and daring, and threatening to be its death, to *cut off the name of Israel*; such the people of God had lately been insulted by: *I looked and behold four horns* (v. 18), which are explained v. 19. *They are the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem*, that is, the Jews both in the country and in the city, because they were the Israel of God. They have *tossed them* (so some read it), as furious bulls with their horns toss that which they are enraged at. They have scattered them, *so that no man did lift up his head*, v. 21. No man durst show his face for fear of them, much less give them any opposition, or make head against them. They are *horns*, denoting their dignity and dominion—*horns exalted*, denoting also their strength, and power, and violence. They are *four horns*, for the Jews are surrounded with them on every side; when they avoid one horn that pushes at them they run upon another. The men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and many of Israel that joined themselves to them, set about the building of the temple; but the enemies of that work from all sides pushed at them, and drove them from it. Rehum, and Shimshai, and the other Samaritans that opposed the building of the temple, were these horns, Ezra 4:8. So were Sanballat and Tobiah, and the Ammonites and Arabians, that opposed the building of the wall, Neh. 4:7. Note, The church's enemies have horns, and use them to the hindrance of every good work. The great enemy of the New-Testament church has *seven heads and ten horns* (Rev. 17:3), so that those who endeavour to do the church any service must expect to be pushed at.

II. We have here the friends of the church active and prevailing. The prophet did himself lift up his eyes and see the four horns,

and saw them so formidable that he began to despair of the safety of every good man, and the success of every good work; but *the Lord* then *showed him four carpenters, or smiths*, who were empowered to cut off these horns, v. 20, 21. With an eye of sense we see the power of the enemies of the church; look which way we will, the world shows us that. But it is with an eye of faith that we see it safe, notwithstanding; it is the Lord that shows us that, as he opened the eyes of the prophet's servant to see the angelic guards round about his master, 2 Ki. 6:17. Observe, Those that were to fray or break the horns of the Gentiles, and to cast them out, were, 1. *Carpenters* or *smiths* (for they are supposed by some to have been horns of iron), men who had skill and ability to do it, whose proper business it was, and who understood their business and had tools at hand to do it with. Note, God calls those to serve the interests of his church whom he either finds, or makes, fit for it. If there be horns (which denote the force and fury of beasts) against the church, there are carpenters (which denote the wisdom and forecast of men) for the church, by which they find ways to master the strongest beasts, for *every kind of beasts is tamed, and has been tamed, of mankind*, Jam. 3:7. 2. They were *four carpenters*, as many horns so many hands to saw them off. Note, Which way soever the church is threatened with mischief, and opposition given to its interests, God can find out ways and means to check the force, to restrain the wrath, and make it turn to his praise. Some by these four carpenters understand Zerubbabel and Joshua, Ezra and Nehemiah, who carried on the work of God in spite of the opposition given to it. Those horned beasts broke into God's vineyard to tread it down; but the good magistrates and the good ministers whom God raised up, though they had not power to *cut off the horns of the wicked* (as David did, Ps. 75:5, 10), yet frightened them and cast them out. Note, When God has work to do he will raise up some to do it and others to defend it and protect those that are employed in the doing of it.

Chapter 2

In this chapter we have, I. Another vision which the prophet saw, not for his own entertainment, but for his satisfaction and the edification of those to whom he was sent (v. 1, 2). II. A sermon upon it, in the rest of the chapter, 1. By way of explication of the vision, showing it to be a prediction of the replenishing of Jerusalem and of its safety and honour (v. 3-5). 2. By way of application. Here is, (1.) A use of exhortation to the Jews that were yet in Babylon, pressing them to hasten their return to their own land, (v. 6-9). (2.) A use of consolation to those that were returned, in reference to the many difficulties they had to struggle with (v. 10-12). (3.) A use of caution to all not to prescribe to God, or limit him, but patiently to wait for him (v. 13).

Verses 1-5

This prophet was ordered, in God's name, to assure the people (ch. 1:16) that a *line should be stretched forth upon Jerusalem*. Now here we have that promise illustrated and confirmed, that the prophet might deliver that part of his message to the people with the more clearness and assurance.

I. He sees, in a vision, a man going to measure Jerusalem (v. 1, 2): *He lifted up his eyes again, and looked*. God had shown him that which was very encouraging to him, (ch. 1:20), and therefore now he *lifted up his eyes again and looked*. Note, The comfortable sights which by faith we have had of God's goodness made to pass before us should engage us to lift up our eyes again, and to search further into the discoveries made to us of the divine grace; for there is still more to be seen. In the close of the foregoing chapter he had seen Jerusalem's enemies baffled and broken, so that now he begins to hope she shall not be ruined. But that is not enough to make her happy, and therefore that is not all that is promised. Here is more carpenter's work to be done. When David had resolved to *cut off the horns of the wicked* he engaged likewise that the *horns of the righteous* should be exalted, Ps. 75:10. And so does the *Son of David* here; for he is *the man*, even *the man Christ Jesus*, whom the prophet sees *with a measuring line in his hand*; for he is the master builder of his church (Heb. 3:3), and he builds exactly by line and level. Zechariah took the boldness to ask him *whither he was going* and what he designed to do with that measuring line. And he readily told him that he was going to *measure Jerusalem*, to take a particular account of the dimensions of it each way, that it might be computed what was necessary for the making of a wall about it, and that it might appear, by comparing its dimensions with the vast numbers that should inhabit it, what additions were necessary to be made for the receiving and containing of them; when multitudes flock to Jerusalem (Isa. 60:4) it is time for her to *enlarge the place of her tent*, Isa. 54:2. Note, God takes notice of the extent of his church, and will take care that, when ever so many guests are brought in to the wedding supper, still there *shall be room*, Lu. 14:22. *In the New Jerusalem, my Father's house above, there are many mansions*.

II. He is informed that this vision means well to Jerusalem, that the measuring line he saw was not a *line of confusion* (as that Isa. 34:11), not a line to mete out for destruction, as when God *purposed to destroy the wall of the daughter of Zion he stretched out a line* (Lam. 2:8); but it is as when he *divided the inheritance by line*, Ps. 78:55. The *angel that talked with the prophet went forth*, as he designed, *to measure Jerusalem*, but *another angel went out to meet him*, to desire that he would first

explain this vision to the prophet, that it might not occasion him any uneasy speculations: *Run, and speak to this young man* (for, it seems, the prophet entered upon his prophecy when he was young, yet no man ought to despise his youth when God thus highly honoured it); he is a young man, not experienced, and may be ready to fear the worst; therefore bid him hope the best; tell him that Jerusalem shall be both safe and great, 1. As safe and great as numbers of men can make it (v. 4): *Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls*; the inhabitants of it shall increase, and multiply, and replenish it to admiration, so that it shall extend itself far beyond the present dimensions which now there is an account taken of. The walls of a city, as they defend it, so they straiten and confine it, and keep its inhabitants from multiplying beyond such a pitch; but Jerusalem, even when it is walled, to keep off the enemy, shall be inhabited *as towns without walls*. The city shall be in a manner lost in the suburbs, as London is, where the out-parishes are more populous than those within the walls. So shall it be with Jerusalem; it shall be extended as freely as if it had no walls at all, and yet shall be as safe as if it had the strongest walls, such a *multitude of men* (which are the best walls of a city) *shall there be therein*, and of *cattle too*, to be not only food, but wealth too, for those men. Note, The increase of the numbers of a people is a great blessing, is a fruit of God's blessing on them and an earnest of further blessings, Ps. 107:38. *They are multiplied, for he blesses them*. 2. As safe and great as the presence of God can make it, v. 5. (1.) It shall be safe, for God himself will be a *wall of fire round about it*. Jerusalem had no walls about it at this time, but lay naked and exposed; formerly, when it had walls, the enemies not only broke through them, but broke them down; but now God will be unto her a wall of fire. Some think it alludes to shepherds that made fires about their flocks, or travellers that made fires about their tents in desert places, to frighten wild beasts from them. God will not only *make a hedge* about them as he did about Job (<ch.> i. 10), not only make walls and bulwarks about them, Isa. 26:1 (those may be battered down), not only be as the mountains round about them, Ps. 125:2 (mountains may be got over), but he will be a wall of fire round them, which cannot be broken through, nor scaled, nor undermined, nor the foundations of it sapped, nor can it be attempted, or approached, without danger to the assailants. God will not only make a wall of fire about her, but he will himself be such a wall; for *our God is a consuming fire* to his and his church's enemies. He is a wall of fire, not on one side only, but round about on every side. (2.) It shall be great, for God himself *will be the glory in the midst of it*. His temple, his altar, shall be set up and attended there, and his institutions observed, and there then shall the tokens of his special presence and favour be, which will be the glory in the midst of them, will make them truly admirable in the eyes of all about them. God will have honour from them, and put honour upon them. Note, Those that have God for their God have him for their glory; those that have him in the midst of them have glory in the midst of them, and thence the church is said to be *all glorious within*. And those persons and places that have God to be the glory in the midst of them have him for a wall of fire round about them, for *upon all that glory there is*, and shall be, *a defence*, Isa. 4:5. Now all this was fulfilled in part in Jerusalem, which in process of time became a very flourishing city, and made a very great figure in those parts of the world, much beyond what could have been expected, considering how low it was brought and how long it was ere it recovered itself; but it was to have its full accomplishment in the gospel-church, which is extended far, as towns without walls, by the admission of the Gentiles into it, and which has God, the Son of God, for its prince and protector.

Verses 6-9

One would have thought that Cyrus's proclamation, which gave liberty to the captive Jews to return to their own land, would suffice to bring them all back, and that, as when Pharaoh gave them leave to quit Egypt and their house of bondage there, they would not leave a hoof behind; but it seems it had not that effect. There were about 40,000 whose spirits God stirred up to go, and they went; but many, perhaps the greater part, staid behind. The land of their captivity was to most of them the land of their nativity; they had taken root there, had gained a settlement, and many of them a very comfortable one; some perhaps had got estates and preferments there, and they did not think they could better themselves by returning to their own land. *Patria est ubicunque bene est—My country is every spot where I feel myself happy.* They had no great affection to their own land, and apprehended the difficulties in their way to it insuperable. This proceeded from a bad cause—a distrust of the power and promise of God, a love of ease and worldly wealth, and an indifference to the religion of their country and to the God of Israel himself; and it had a bad effect, for it was a tacit censure of those as foolish, rash, and given to change, that did return, and a weakening of their hands in the work of God. Such as these could not sing (Ps. 137) in their captivity, for they had *forgotten thee, O Jerusalem!* and were so far from preferring thee before their chief joy that they preferred any joy before thee. Here is therefore another proclamation issued out by the God of Israel, strictly charging and commanding all his free-born subjects, wherever they were dispersed, speedily to return into their own land and render themselves at their respective posts there. They are loudly summoned (v. 6): *Ho! ho! come forth, and flee from the land of the north, saith the Lord.* This fitly follows upon the promise of the rebuilding and enlarging of Jerusalem. If God will build it for them and their comfort, they must come and inhabit it for him and his glory, and not continue sneaking in Babylon. Note, The promises and privileges with which God's people are blessed should engage us, whatever it cost us, to join ourselves to them and *cast in our lot among them.* When Zion is enlarged, to make room for all God's Israel, it is the greatest madness imaginable for any of them to stay in Babylon. The captivity of a sinful state is by no means to be continued in, though a man be ever so easy upon temporal accounts. No: *Come forth and flee* with all speed, and lose no time. *Escape for thy life; look not behind thee.* To induce them to hasten their return, let them consider, 1. They are now dispersed, and are concerned to incorporate themselves for their mutual common defence (v. 6): *"I have spread you abroad as the four winds of heaven, sent some into one corner of the world and some into another; this has been your condition a long time, and therefore you should now think of coming together again, to help one another."* God owns that his scattering them was in wrath, and therefore they must take this invitation as a token of God's being willing to be reconciled to them again, so that they kicked at his kindness in refusing to accept the call. 2. They are now in bondage, and are concerned to assert their own liberty; and therefore, *"Deliver thyself, O Zion! flee from the oppressor, and make the best of thy way.* Let us see some such bold efforts and struggles to help thyself as become the generous gracious seed of Abraham." v. 7. Note, When Christ has proclaimed that deliverance to the captives which he has himself wrought out it then concerns each of us to *deliver ourselves, to loose ourselves from the bands of our necks* (Isa. 52:2), and, since we are under grace, to resolve that *sin shall not have dominion over us,* Zion herself is here said to *dwell with the daughter of Babylon,* because many of the *precious sons of Zion* dwelt there, and where the people of God are there the church of God is, for it is not

tied to places. Now it is not fit that Zion should dwell with the daughter of Babylon; what communion can light have with darkness? Zion will be in danger of partaking with the daughter of Babylon both *in her sins* and *in her plagues*; and therefore, "*Come out of her, my people*, Rev. 18:4. *Deliver thyself, O Zion!* by a speedy return to thy own land, and do not destroy thyself by continuing in that polluted devoted land." Those that would be found among the generation of God's children must *save themselves from the untoward generation* of this world; it was St. Peter's charge to his new converts, Acts 2:40. 3. They have seemed to be forsaken and forgotten of God, but God will now make it to appear that he espouses their cause and will plead it with jealousy, v. 8,9. It was a discouragement to those who remained in Babylon to hear of the difficulties and oppositions which their brethren met with that had returned, by which they were still in danger of being crushed and overpowered. "And we might as well sit still" (think they) "as rise up and fall." In answer to this objection, the *angel that talked with the prophet* (that is, Jesus Christ) tells him what he had commission to do for their protection and the perfecting of their salvation, and herein he has an eye to the great redemption which, in the fulness of time, he was to be the author of. Christ, who is Jehovah, and the *Lord of hosts*, of all the hosts of heaven and earth, in both which he has a sovereign power, *says, He* (that is, the Father) *has sent me*. Note, What Jesus has done, and does, for his church against his enemies, he was sent and commissioned by the Father to do. With great satisfaction he often speaks of *the Father that sent him*. (1.) He is sent *after the glory*. After the glorious beginning of their deliverance he is sent to perfect it, for he is the finisher of that work which he is the author of. Christ is sent, in the first place, to the nation and people of the Jews, *to whom pertained the glory*, Rom. 9:4. And he was himself the *glory of his people Israel*. But *after the glory*, after his care of them, he is *sent to the nations, to be a light to lighten the Gentiles*, by the power of his gospel to captivate them, and bring them, and every high thought among them, into obedience to himself. (2.) He is *sent to the nations that spoiled them*, to take vengeance on them for the wrongs done to Zion, when the year of his redeemed comes and the *year of recompences for the controversy of Zion*, Isa. 34:8. He is sent to *shake his hand upon them*, to lift up his mighty hand against them and to lay upon them his heavy hand, to *bruise them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel*, Ps. 2:9. Some think it intimates how easily God can subdue and humble them with the turn of his hand; it is but shaking his hand over them and the work is done. *They shall be a spoil to their servants*, shall be enslaved to those whom they had enslaved, and be plundered by those whom they had plundered. In Esther's time this was fulfilled, when the *Jews had rule over those that hated them* (Esth. 9:1), and often in the time of the Maccabees. The promise is further fulfilled in Christ's victory over our spiritual enemies, his *spoiling principalities and powers and making a show of them openly*, Col. 2:15. And it is still in force to the gospel-church. Christ will reckon with all that are enemies to it, and sooner or later will make them *his footstool*, Ps. 110:1; Rev. 3:9. (3.) What he will do for his church shall be an evident proof of God's tender care of it and affection to it: *He that touches you touches the apple of his eye*. This is a high expression of God's love to his church. By his resentment of the injuries done to her it appears how dear she is to him, how he interests himself in all her interests, and takes what is done against her, not only as done against himself, but as done against the very apple of his eye, the tenderest part, which nature has made very fine, has put a double guard upon, and taught us to be in a special manner careful of, and which the least touch is a great offence to. This encourages the people of God to pray with David (Ps. 17:8), *Keep me*

as the apple of thy eye; and engages them to do as Solomon directs (Prov. 7:2), to *keep his law as the apple of their eye*. Some understand it thus: "*He that touches you touches the apple of his own eye;* whoever do you any injury will prove, in the issue, to have done the greatest injury to themselves." (4.) It shall be an evident proof of Christ's mission: *You shall know that the Lord of hosts has sent me* to be the protector of his church, that the promises made to the church are yea and amen in him. Christ's victory over our spiritual enemies proves that the Father sent him and was with him.

Verses 10-13

Here is, I. Joy proclaimed to the church of God, to the *daughter of Zion*, that had separated herself from the *daughter of Babylon*. The Jews that had returned were in distress and danger, their enemies in the neighbourhood were spiteful against them, their friends that remained in Babylon were cool towards them, shy of them, and declined coming in to their assistance; and yet they are directed to *sing*, and to *rejoice* even in tribulation. Note, Those that have recovered their purity, and integrity, and spiritual liberty, though they have not yet recovered their outward prosperity, have reason to sing and rejoice, to give glory to God and take comfort to themselves.

I. God will have a people among them. If their brethren in Babylon will not come to them, those of other nations shall, and shall replenish Jerusalem and the cities of Judah: *Many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day* that are now at a distance from him and strangers to him. The Jewish nation, after the captivity, multiplied very much, by the accession of proselytes to it, that were naturalized, and were entitled to all the privileges of native Israelites, and perhaps they were equal in number; and therefore Paul mentions it as an honour to him which many Jews had not, that he was of *the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews*, Phil. 3:5. And this was an earnest of the bringing in of the Gentiles into the christian church and in that this and other similar promises were to have their full accomplishment. It was therefore strange that that should be so great an offence to the Jews, as we find it was in the apostles' times, which was promised them as a blessing in the prophets' times—that *many nations* should be *joined to the Lord*. And, as there had been one law, so should there be one gospel *for the stranger and for those born in the land*; whatever nation they come from, when they *join themselves to the Lord, they shall be my people*, as dear to God as ever Israel had been. Note, God will own those for his people who with purpose of heart join themselves to him; and, when many do so, we ought to look upon them, not with a jealous eye, but with a joyful one. Angels rejoice, and therefore so should the daughter of Zion, when many nations are joined to the Lord.

II. They shall have his presence among them: *Sing and rejoice, for I come*. Those to whom God comes have reason to rejoice, for he will be to them their chief joy. God will come, not to make them a visit only, but to reside with them and preside over them: *I will dwell in the midst of thee* (v. 10), and it is repeated (v. 11), because it was to have a double accomplishment, 1. In the dedication of the temple, in their regularly observing all God's institutions there and God's owning them therein. Those have God *dwelling in the midst of them* that have his ordinances administered in their purity, and a divine power going along with them; with these tokens of God's presence the Jewish church was blessed, after this, as much as ever. 2. In the incarnation of Christ. He that here promises to dwell among them is that *Lord whom the Lord of hosts has sent* (v. 11), and therefore must be the *Lord Jesus*, who came and dwelt in the midst of the Jewish nation, the eternal *Word*, that was *made flesh, and dwelt*

among us. This was the great honour reserved for that nation in its last days; the promise of it effectually secured their continuance till it was accomplished. They could not be destroyed while that blessing was in them; and the prospect of it, according to the promise, was the great support and comfort of those who *looked for redemption in Jerusalem.* It is promised that when Christ comes and dwells among them *they shall know that the Lord of hosts has sent him;* all that were Israelites indeed were made to know it; sufficient proofs were given of it by the miracles Christ wrought, so that they might have known it, and yet there were those that perished in ignorance and unbelief, that would not know it, for, *if they had known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.*

III. They shall have all their ancient dignities and privileges restored to them again, v. 12. 1. Canaan shall be a holy land again, not polluted by sin as it had been formerly, not profaned by the enemies as it had been of late; it shall be an enclosure again, and not laid in common. 2. Judah shall be in this holy land, shall inhabit it, and enjoy the comfort of it, and no longer be lost and scattered in Babylon. 3. Judah shall be God's portion, which he will delight in, which shall be dear to him, by which he will be served, and in which he will be glorified. *The Lord's portion is his people.* 4. God will *inherit Judah* again as *his portion,* will claim his interest, and recover the possession out of the hands of those that had invaded his right. He will protect his people and govern them as a man does his inheritance, and will be at home among them. 5. He will *choose Jerusalem again,* as he had chosen it formerly, to *put his name there;* he will renew and confirm the choice, and continue it a chosen place, till it must resign its honours to the Jerusalem that is from above. Though the election seemed to be set aside for a while, yet it *shall obtain.*

II. Here is silence proclaimed to all the world besides, v. 13. The daughter of Zion must sing, but *all flesh must be silent.* Observe here, 1. A very awful description of God's appearances for the relief of his people. He is *raised up out of his holy habitation;* as a man out of sleep (Ps. 44:23; 78:65), or as a man entering with resolution upon a business that he will go through with. Heaven is his holy habitation above; thence we must expect him to appear, Isa. 64:1. His temple is so in this lower world; thence from *between the cherubim* he will *shine forth,* Ps. 80:1. He is about to do something unusual, unexpected, and very surprising, and to plead his people's cause, which had long seemed neglected. 2. A seasonable caution and direction at such a time: *Be silent, O all flesh! before the Lord*—before Christ and his grace (let not flesh object against the methods he takes)—before God and his providence; the enemies of the church shall be silenced; all iniquity shall stop her mouth. The friends of the church also must be silent. Leave it to God to take his own way, and neither prescribe to him what he should do nor quarrel with him whatever he does. *Be still, and know that he is God. Stand still, and see his salvation.* See Hab. 2:20; Zep. 1:7. Silently acquiesce in his holy will, and patiently wait the issue, as those who are assured that when God is *raised up out of his holy habitation* he will not retreat, nor sit down again, till he has accomplished his whole work.

Chapter 3

The vision in the foregoing chapter gave assurances of the re-establishing of the civil interests of the Jewish nation, the promises of which terminated in Christ. Now the vision in this chapter concerns their church-state, and their ecclesiastical interests, and assures them that they shall be put into a good posture again; and the promises of this also have an eye to Christ, who is not only our prince, but the high priest of our profession, of whom Joshua was a type. Here is, I. A vision relating to Joshua, as the representative of the church in his time, representing the disadvantages he laboured under, and the people in him, with the redress of the grievances of both. 1. He is accused by Satan, but is brought off by Christ (v. 1, 2). 2. He appears in filthy garments, but has them changed (v. 3-5). 3. He is assured of being established in his office if he conduct himself well (v. 6, 7). II. A sermon relating to Christ, who is here called "The branch," who should be endued with all perfections for his undertaking, should be carried triumphantly through it, and by whom we should have pardon and peace (v. 8-10).

Verses 1-7

There was a Joshua that was a principal agent in the first settling of Israel in Canaan; here is another of the same name very active in their second settlement there after the captivity; Jesus is the same name, and it signifies *Saviour*; and they were both figures of him that was to come, our chief captain and our chief priest. The angel that talked with *Zechariah* showed him *Joshua the high priest*; it is probable that the prophet saw him frequently, that he spoke to him, and that there was a great intimacy between them; but, in his common views, he only saw how he appeared before men; if he must know how he stands before the Lord, it must be shown him in vision; and so it is shown him. And men are really as they are with God, not as they appear in the eye of the world. He stood *before the angel of the Lord*, that is, before Christ, the Lord of the angels, to whom even the high priests themselves, of Aaron's order, were accountable. He *stood before the angel of the Lord* to execute his office, to minister to God under the inspection of the angels. He stood to consult the oracle on the behalf of Israel, for whom, as high priest, he was agent. Guilt and corruption are our two great discouragements when we stand before God. By the guilt of the sins committed by us we have become obnoxious to the justice of God; by the power of the sin that dwells in us we have become odious to the holiness of God. All God's Israel are in danger upon these two accounts. Joshua was so here, for *the law made men priests that had infirmity*, Heb. 7:28. And, as to both, we have relief from Jesus Christ, who is made of God to us both *righteousness and sanctification*.

I. Joshua is accused as a criminal, but is justified. 1. A violent opposition is made to him. *Satan stands at his right hand to resist him* to be a *Satan to him, a law-adversary*. He stands at his right hand, as the prosecutor, or witness, at the right hand of the prisoner. Note, The devil is the accuser of the brethren, that *accuses them before God day and night*, Rev. 12:10. Some think the chief priest was accused for the sin of many of the inferior priests, in marrying strange wives, which they were much guilty of after their return out of captivity, Ezra 9:1, 2; Neh. 13:28. When God is about to reestablish the priesthood Satan objects the sins that were found among the priests, as rendering them unworthy the honour designed them. It is by our own folly that we give Satan advantage against us and furnish him with matter for reproach and accusation; and if any thing be

amiss, especially with the priests, Satan will be sure to aggravate it and make the worst of it. He *stood to resist him*, that is, to oppose the service he was doing for the public good. He stood *at his right hand*, the hand of action, to discourage him, and raise difficulties in his way. Note, When we stand before God to minister to him, or stand up for God to serve his interests, we must expect to meet with all the resistance that Satan's subtlety and malice can give us. Let us then resist him that resists us and he shall flee from us. 2. A victorious defence is made for him (v. 2): *The Lord* (that is, the Lord Christ) *said unto Satan, The Lord rebuke thee*. Note, It is the happiness of the saints that the Judge is their friend; the same that they are accused to is their patron and protector, and an advocate for them, and he will be sure to bring them off. (1.) Satan is here checked by one that has authority, that has conquered him, and many a time silenced him. *The accuser of the brethren*, of the ministers and the ministry, *is cast out*; his indictments are quashed, and his suggestions against them as well as his suggestions to them, are shown to be malicious, frivolous, and vexatious. *The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan! The Lord said* (that is, the Lord our Redeemer), *The Lord rebuke thee*, that is, the Lord the Creator. The power of God is engaged for the making of the grace of Christ effectual. "*The Lord restrain thy malicious rage, reject thy malicious charge, and revenge upon thee thy enmity to a servant of his*" Note, those that belong to Christ have him ready to appear vigorously for them when Satan appears most vehement against them. He does not parley with him, but stops his mouth immediately with this sharp reprimand: *The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan!* This is the best way of dealing with that furious enemy. *Get thee behind me, Satan*. (2.) Satan is here argued with. He resists the priest, but let him know that his resistance, [1.] Will be fruitless; it will be to no purpose to attempt any thing against Jerusalem, for *the Lord has chosen* it, and he will abide by his choice. Whatever is objected against God's people, God saw it; he foresaw it when he chose them and yet he chose them, and therefore that can be no inducement to him now to reject them; he knew the worst of them when he chose them; and his election shall obtain. [2.] It is unreasonable; for *is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?* Joshua is so, and the priesthood, and the people, whose representative he is. Christ has not that to say for them for which they are to be praised, but that for which they are to be pitied. Note, Christ is ready to make the best of his people, and takes notice of every thing that is pleadable in excuse of their infirmities, so far is he from being extreme to mark what they do amiss. They have been lately in the fire; no wonder that they are black and smoked, and have the smell of fire upon them, but they are therefore to be excused, not to be accused. One can expect no other than that those who but the other day were captives in Babylon should appear very mean and despicable. They have been lately brought out of great affliction; and is Satan so barbarous as to desire to have them thrown into affliction again? They have been wonderfully delivered out of the fire, that God might be glorified in them; and will he then cast them off and abandon them? No, he will not quench the smoking flax, the smoking fire-brand; for he snatched it out of the fire because he intended to make use of it. Note, Narrow escapes from imminent danger are happy presages and powerful pleas for more eminent favours. A converted soul is a *brand plucked out of the fire* by a miracle of free grace, and therefore shall not be left to be a prey to Satan.

II. Joshua appears as one polluted, but is purified; for he represents the Israel of God, who are all *as an unclean thing*, till they are washed and sanctified *in the name of the Lord Jesus* and *by the Spirit of our God*. Now observe here, 1. The impurity wherein Joshua appeared (v. 3): *He was clothed*, not only in coarse, but in *filthy garments*, such as did very ill become the

dignity of his office and the sanctity of his work. By the law of Moses the garments of the high priest were to be *for glory and for beauty*, Ex. 28:2. But Joshua's garments were a shame and reproach to him; yet in them *he stood before the angel of the Lord*; he had no clean linen wherein to minister and to do the duty of his place. Now this intimates, not only that the priesthood was poor and despised, and loaded with contempt, but that there was a great deal of iniquity cleaving to the holy things. The returned Jews were so taken up with their troubles that they thought they needed not complain of their sins, and were not aware that those were the great hindrances of the progress of God's work among them; because they were free from idolatry they thought themselves chargeable with no iniquity. But God showed them there were many things amiss in them, which retarded the advances of God's favours towards them. There were spiritual enemies warring against them, more dangerous than any of the neighbouring nations. The Chaldee paraphrase says, *Joshua had sons who took unto them wives which were not lawful for the priests to take*; and we find it was so, Ezra 10:18. And, no doubt, there were other things amiss in the priesthood, Mal. 2:1. Yet Joshua was permitted to *stand before the angel of the Lord*. Though his children did not as they should, yet the covenant of priesthood was not broken. Note, Christ bears with his people, whose hearts are upright with him, and admits them into communion with himself, notwithstanding their manifold infirmities. 2. The provision that was made for his cleansing. Christ gave orders to the angels that attended him, and were ready to do his pleasure, to put Joshua into a better state. Joshua presented himself before the Lord in his filthy garments, as an object of his pity; and Christ graciously looked upon him with compassion, and not, as justly he might have done, with indignation. Christ loathed the filthiness of Joshua's garments, yet did not put him away, but put them away. Thus God by his grace does with those whom he chooses to be priests to himself; he parts between them and their sins, and so prevents their sins parting between them and their God; he reconciles himself to the sinner, but not to the sin. Two things are here done for Joshua, representing a double work of divine grace wrought in and for believers:—(1.) His filthy garments are taken from him, v. 4. The meaning of this is given us in what Christ said, and he said it as one having authority, *Behold, I have caused thy iniquity to pass from thee*. The guilt of it is taken away by pardoning mercy, the stench and stain of it by peace spoken to the conscience, and the power of it broken by renewing grace. When God forgives our sins he *causes our iniquity to pass from us*, that it may not appear against us, to condemn us; it passes from us *as far as the east is from the west*. When he sanctifies the nature he enables us to *put off the old man*, to cast away from us the filthy rags of our corrupt affections and lusts, as things we will never have any thing more to do with, will never gird to us or appear in. Thus Christ *washes those from their sins in his own blood whom he makes to our God kings and priests*, Rev. 1:5, 6. Either we must be cleansed from the pollutions of sin or we shall, *as polluted, be put from that priesthood*, Ezra 2:62. (2.) He is clothed anew, has not only the shame of his filthiness removed, but the shame of his nakedness covered: *I will clothe thee with change of raiment*. Joshua had no clean linen of his own, but Christ will provide for him, for he will not let a priesthood of his own instituting be lost, be either contemptible before men or unacceptable before God. The change of raiment here is rich costly raiment, such as is worn on high days. Joshua shall appear as lovely as ever he appeared loathsome. Those that minister in holy things shall not only cease to do evil, but learn to do well; God will make them wise, and humble, and diligent, and faithful, and examples of every thing that is good; and then Joshua is clothed with change of raiment. Thus those whom Christ makes

spiritual priests are clothed with the spotless robe of his righteousness and appear before God in that, and with the graces of his Spirit, which are ornaments to them. *The righteousness of saints*, both imputed and implanted, is the fine linen, clean and white, with which *the bride, the Lamb's wife*, is arrayed, Rev. 19:8.

III. Joshua is in danger of being turned out of office; but, instead of that, he is reinstated and established in his office. He not only has his sins pardoned, and is furnished with grace sufficient for himself, but, as *rectus in curia—acquitted in court*, he is restored to his former honours and trusts. 1. The crown of the priesthood is put upon him, v. 5. This was done at the special instance and request of the prophet: I said, "*Let them set a fair mitre upon his head*, as a badge of his office. Now that he looks clean, let him also look great; let him be dressed up in all the garments of the high priest." Note, When God designs the restoring or reviving of religion he stirs up his prophets and people to pray for it, and does it in answer to their prayers. Zechariah prayed that the angels might be ordered to set the mitre on Joshua's head, and they did it immediately, and *clothed him with the priestly garments*; for no man took this honour to himself, *but he that was called of God* to it. *The angel of the Lord stood by*, as having the oversight of the work which the created angels were employed in. He stood by, as one well pleased with it, and resolved to stand by the orders he had given for the doing of it and to continue his presence with that priesthood. 2. The covenant of the priesthood is renewed with him, which is called God's *covenant of peace*, Num. 25:12. Mr. Pemble calls it *the patent of his office*, which is here declared and delivered to him before witnesses, v. 6, 7. The angel of the Lord, having taken care to make him fit for his office (and all that God calls to any office he either finds fit or makes so), invests him in it. And though he is not *made a priest with an oath* (that honour is reserved for him who is a priest after the order of Melchisedek, Heb. 7:21), yet, being a type of him, he is inaugurated with a solemn declaration of the terms upon which he held his office. The angel of the Lord protested to Joshua that, if he would be sure to do the duty of his place, he should enjoy the dignity and reward of it. Now see, (1.) What the conditions are upon which he enters into his office. Let him know that he is upon his good behaviour; he must *walk in God's ways*, that is, he must live a good life and be holy in all manner of conversation; he must go before the people in the paths of God's commandments, and walk circumspectly. He must also *keep God's charge*, must carefully do all the services of the priesthood, and must see to it that the inferior priests performed the duties of their place decently and in order. He must *take heed to himself, and to all the flock*, Acts 20:28. Note, Good ministers must be good Christians; yet that is not enough: they have a trust committed to them, they are charged with it, and they must keep it with all possible care, that they may give up their account of it with joy, 1 Tim. 6:14. (2.) What the privileges are which we may expect, and be assured of, in the due discharge of his office. His patent runs, *Quamdiu se bene gesserit—During good behaviour*. Let him be sure to do his part, and God will own him. [1.] "*Thou shalt judge my house; thou shalt preside in the affairs of the temple, and the inferior priests shall be under thy direction*." Note, The power of the church, and of church rulers, is not a legislative, but only a judicial power. The high priest might not make any new laws for God's house, nor ordain any other rites of worship than what God had ordained; but he must judge God's house, that is, he must see to it that God's laws and ordinances were punctually observed, must protect and encourage those that did observe them, and enquire into and punish the violation of them. [2.] "*Thou shalt also keep my courts; thou shalt have oversight of what is done*

in all the courts of the temple, and shalt keep them pure and in good order for the worship to be performed in them." Note, Ministers are God's stewards, and they are to keep his courts, in honour of him who is the chief Lord and for the preserving of equity and good order among his tenants. [3.] "*I will give thee places to walk among those that stand by*, among these angels that are inspectors and assistants in this instalment." They shall stand by while Joshua is at work for God, and shall be as a guard to him, or he shall be highly honoured and respected as an *angel of God*, Gal. 4:14. Ministers are called *angels*, Rev. 1. 20. Those that *walk in God's ways* may be said to *walk among the angels* themselves, for they do the will of God as the angels do it that are in heaven, and are their *fellow-servants*, Rev. 19:10. Some make it a promise of eternal life, and of a reward of his fidelity in the future state. Heaven is not only a palace, a place to repose in, but a paradise, a garden, a place to walk in; and there are walks among the angels, in society with that holy and glorious company. See Eze. 28:14.

Verses 8-10

As the promises made to David often slide insensibly into promises of the Messiah, whose kingdom David's was a type of, so the promises here made to Joshua immediately rise as far upward, and look as far forward, as to Christ, whose priesthood Joshua's was now a shadow of, not only in general, as it kept up the line of Aaron's priesthood, but especially as it was the reviving of that happy method of correspondence between heaven and earth, to which a great interruption had been given by the iniquity and captivity of Israel. Christ is a high priest, as Joshua was, for sinners and sufferers, to mediate for those that have been under guilt and wrath. And it was fit that Joshua should understand the priesthood of Christ, because all the virtue of his priesthood, its value and usefulness to the church, depended upon and was derived from the priesthood of Christ. See, I. To whom this promise of Christ is directed (v. 8): "*Hear now, O Joshua!* Thou hast heard with pleasure what belongs to thyself; but, behold, a greater than Joshua is at hand. *Hear now* concerning him, *thou* and the rest of the priests, *thy fellows*, *who sit before thee*, at thy feet, as learners, but whom thou art to look upon as *thy fellows*, for all you are brethren; let the high priest, and all the inferior priests, take notice of this, for they are *men wondered at*." They are set *for signs*, for types and figures of Christ's priesthood. What God now did for Joshua and his fellows was a happy omen of the coming of the Messiah promised, and would be so interpreted, with a pleasing wonder, by all that had understanding of the times. Or they are *wondered at* for their singularity, hooted at as strange sort of people, because they *run not with others to the same excess of riot* (1 Pt. 4:4), or for their strange afflictions and surprising deliverance out of them, as Ps. 71:7, *I am as a wonder unto many*. They are *men of wonder*; they are a wonder to themselves, are amazed to think how happily their condition is altered. God's people and ministers are, upon many accounts, men wondered at. The high priest and his fellows here (as the prophet and his children, Isa. 8:18) are for signs and for wonders. But men's wonder at them will cease when the Messiah comes, as the stars are eclipsed by the light of the sun; for *his name shall be called Wonderful*.

II. The promise itself, which consists of several parts, all designed for the comfort and encouragement of Joshua and his friends in that great good work of building the temple, which they were now engaged in. An eye to Christ, and a believing dependence upon the promises relating to him and his kingdom, would carry them through the difficulties they met with in that and their other services. 1. The Messiah shall come: *Behold, I will bring forth my servant the branch*. He has been long hid, but

the fulness of time is now at hand, when he shall be brought forth into the world, brought forth among his people Israel. God himself undertakes to bring him forth, and therefore, no doubt, he will own him and stand by him. He is God's servant, employed in his work, obedient to his will, and entirely devoted to his honour and glory. He is the branch; so he was called Isa. 4:2, *The branch of the Lord*. Isa. 11:1, *A branch out of the roots of Jesse*. Jer. 23:5, *A righteous branch*; and Jer. 23:15, *The branch of righteousness*. His beginning was small, as a tender branch, but in time he should become a great tree and fill the earth, Isa. 53:2. He is the branch from which all our fruit must be gathered. 2. Many eyes shall be upon him. He is *the stone laid before Joshua*, alluding to the foundation or chief corner-stone, of the temple, which probably was laid, with great solemnity, in the presence of Joshua. Christ is not only the branch, which is the beginning of a tree, but the foundation, which is the beginning of a building; and, when he shall be brought forth, *seven eyes shall be upon him*. The eye of his Father was upon him, to take care of him, and protect him, especially in his sufferings; when he was buried in the grave, as the foundation-stones are under ground, the eyes of Heaven were still upon him, buried out of men's sight, but not out of God's. The eyes of all the prophets and Old-Testament saints were upon this one stone; Abraham rejoiced to see Christ's day, and he *saw it and was glad*. The eyes of all believers are upon him; they look unto him and are saved, as the eyes of the stung Israelites were upon the brazen serpent. Some understand this *one stone* to have the seven eyes in it as the wheels had in Ezekiel's vision, and think it denotes that perfection of wisdom and knowledge which Jesus Christ was endued with, for the good of his church. *His eyes run to and fro through the earth*. 3. God himself will beautify him, and put honour upon him: *I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the Lord of hosts*. This stone the builders refused, as rough and unsightly; but God undertakes to smooth and polish it, nay, and to carve it so that it shall be the *head stone of the corner*, the most beautiful in all the building. Christ was God's workmanship; and abundance of his wisdom appears in the contrivance of our redemption, which will appear when the engraving is perfected. This stone is a *precious stone*, though laid for a *foundation*; and the *graving* of it seems to allude to the precious stones in the breast-plate of the high priest, which had the names of the tribes *graven* upon them, as the *engraving of a signet*, Ex. 28:21, 22. In that breast-plate there were twelve stones laid before Aaron, and for aught that appears those were lost; but there shall be one worth them all laid before Joshua, and that is Christ himself. This precious stone shall sparkle as if it had seven eyes; there shall appear a perfection of wisdom and prudence in the oracles that proceed from the breast-plate of judgment. And God will *engrave the engraving thereof*; he will entrust Christ with all his elect, and he shall appear as their representative, and agent for them, as the high priest did when he went in before the Lord with the names of all Israel engraven in the precious stones of his breast-plate. When God gave a remnant to Christ, to be brought through grace to glory, then he *engraved the graving* of this *precious stone*. 4. By him sin shall be taken away, both the guilt and the dominion of it: *I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day*. When the high priest had the names of Israel engraven on the precious stones he was adorned with he is said to *bear the iniquity of the holy things* (Ex. 28:38); but the law *made nothing perfect*, Heb. 10:1. He bore the iniquity of the land, as a type of Christ; but he could not remove it; the doing of that was reserved for Christ, that blessed *Lamb of God, that takes away the sin of the world*; and he did it *in one day*, that day in which he suffered and died; that was done by the sacrifice offered that day which could not be done by the sacrifices of ages before, no, not by all the days of

atonement which from Moses to Christ returned every year. This agrees with the angel's prediction (Dan. 9:24): He shall *finish transgression and make an end of sin*. And some make the engravings wherewith God engraved him to signify the wounds and stripes which were given to his blessed body, which he underwent for our *transgression*, for our *iniquity*, and *by which we are healed*. 5. The effect of all this shall be the sweet enjoyment which all believers shall have of themselves, and the sweet communion they shall have with one another (v. 10): *In that day you shall call every man his neighbour under the vine and the fig-tree*, which yield most pleasant fruit, and whose leaves also afford a refreshing shade for arbours. When iniquity is taken away, (1.) We reap precious benefits and privileges from our justification, more precious than the products of the vine or the fig-tree, Rom. 5:1. (2.) We repose in a sweet tranquillity and are quiet from the fear of evil. What should terrify us when iniquity is taken away, when nothing can hurt us? We sit down under Christ's shadow with delight, and by it are sheltered from the scorching heat of the curse of the law. We live as Israel in the peaceable reign of Solomon (1 Ki. 4:24, 25); for he is the prince of peace. (3.) We ought to invite others to come to partake with us in the enjoyment of these privileges, to *call every man his neighbour* to come and sit with him, for mutual converse, under the vine and fig-tree, and to share with him in the fruits he is surrounded with. Gospel-grace, as far as it comes with power, makes men neighbourly; and those that have the comfort of acquaintance with Christ themselves, and communion with God through him, will be forward to court others to it. *Let us go unto the house of the Lord.*

Chapter 4

In this chapter we have another comfortable vision, which, as it was explained to the prophet, had much in it for the encouragement of the people of God in their present straits, which were so great that they thought their case helpless, that their temple could never be rebuilt nor their city replenished; and therefore the scope of the vision is to show that God would, by his own power, perfect the work, though the assistance given to it by its friends were ever so weak, and the resistance given to it by its enemies were ever so strong. Here is, I. The awakening of the prophet to observe the vision (v. 1). II. The vision itself, of a candlestick with seven lamps, which were supplied with oil, and kept burning, immediately from two olive-trees that grew by it, one on either side (v. 2, 3). III. The general encouragement hereby intended to be given to the builders of the temple to go on in that good work, assuring them that it should be brought to perfection at last (v. 4–10). IV. The particular explication of the vision, for the illustration of these assurances (v. 11–14).

Verses 1-10

Here is, I. The prophet prepared to receive the discovery that was to be made to him: *The angel that talked with him came and waked him*, v. 1. It seems, though he was in conference with an angel, and about matters of great and public concern, yet he grew dull and fell asleep, as it should seem, while the angel was yet talking with him. Thus the disciples, when they saw Christ transfigured, were *heavy with sleep*, Lu. 9:32. The prophet's spirit, no doubt, was willing to attend to that which was to be seen and heard, but the flesh was weak; his body could not keep pace with his soul in divine contemplations; the strangeness of the visions perhaps stupefied him, and so he was overcome with sleep, or perhaps the sweetness of the visions composed him and even sung him asleep. Daniel was in a *deep sleep when he heard the voice of the angel's words*, Dan. 10:9. We shall never be fit for converse with spirits till we have got clear of these bodies of flesh. It should seem, the angel let him lose himself a little, that he might be fresh to receive new discoveries, but then *waked him*, to his surprise, *as a man that is wakened out of his sleep*. Note, We need the Spirit of God, not only to make known to us divine things, but to make us take notice of them. *He wakens morning by morning, he wakens my ear*, Isa. 50:4. We should beg of God that, whenever he speaks to us, he would awaken us, and we should then *stir up ourselves*.

II. The discovery that was made to him when he was thus prepared. The angel asked him, *What seest thou?* v. 2. When he was awake perhaps he would not have taken notice of what was presented to his view if he had not thus been excited to look about him. When he observed he saw a *golden candlestick*, such a one as was in the temple formerly, and with the like this temple should in due time be furnished. The church is a candlestick, set up for the enlightening of this dark world and the holding forth of the light of divine revelation to it. The candle is God's; the church is but the candlestick, but all of gold, denoting the great worth and excellence of the church of God. This golden candlestick had *seven lamps* branching out from it, so many sockets, in each of which was a burning and shining light. The Jewish church was but one, and though the Jews that were dispersed, it is probable, had synagogues in other countries, yet they were but as so many lamps belonging to one candlestick; but now, under the gospel, Christ is the centre of unity, and not Jerusalem, or any one place; and therefore seven particular

churches are represented, not as *seven lamps*, but as seven several *golden candlesticks*, Rev. 1:20. This candlestick had one *bowl*, or common receiver, on the top, into which oil was continually dropping, and from it, by seven secret pipes, or passages, it was diffused to the seven lamps, so that, without any further care, they received oil as fast as they wasted it (as in those which we call *fountain-ink-horns*, or *fountain-pens*); they never wanted, nor were ever glutted, and so kept always burning clear. And the bowl too was continually supplied, without any care or attendance of man; for (v. 3) he saw *two olive-trees*, one on each side the candlestick, that were so fat and fruitful that of their own accord they poured plenty of oil continually into the bowl, which by two larger pipes (v. 12) dispersed the oil to smaller ones and so to the lamps; so that nobody needed to attend this candlestick, to furnish it with oil (it tarried not for man, nor waited for the sons of men), the scope of which is to show that God easily can, and often does, accomplish his gracious purposes concerning his church by his own wisdom and power, without any art or labour of man, and that though sometimes he makes use of instruments, yet he neither needs them nor is tied to them, but can do his work without them, and will rather than it shall be undone.

III. The enquiry which the prophet made concerning the meaning of this, and the gentle reproof given him for his dulness (v. 4): *I answered and spoke to the angel*, saying, *What are these, my lord?* Observe how respectfully he speaks to the angel; he calls him *my lord*. Those that would be taught must give honour to their teachers. He saw what these *were*, but asked what these *signified*. Note, It is very desirable to know the meaning of God's manifestations of himself and his mind both in his word and by his ordinances and providences. *What mean you by these services*, by these signs? And those that would understand the mind of God must be inquisitive. *Then shall we know if we follow on to know*, if we not only *hear*, but, as Christ, *ask questions* upon what we hear, Lu. 2:46. The angel answered him with a question, *Knowest thou not what these be?* intimating that if he had considered, and compared spiritual things with spiritual, he might have guessed at the meaning of these things; for he knew that there was a golden candlestick in the tabernacle, which it was the priests' constant business to supply with oil and to keep burning, for the use of the tabernacle; when therefore he saw, in vision, such a candlestick, with lamps always kept burning, and yet no priests to attend it, nor any occasion for them, he might discern the meaning of this to be that though God had set up the priesthood again, yet he could carry on his own work for and in his people without them. Note, We have reason to be ashamed of ourselves that we do not more readily apprehend the meaning of divine discoveries. The angel asked the prophet this question, to draw from him an acknowledgment of his own dulness, and darkness, and slowness to understand, and he had it immediately: *"I said, No, my lord; I know not what these are."* Visions had their significance, but often dark and hard to be understood, and the prophets themselves were not always aware of it at first. But those that would be taught of God must see and acknowledge their own ignorance, and their need to be taught, and must apply to God for instruction. To him that gave us the cabinet we must apply for the key wherewith to unlock it. God will teach the meek and humble, not those that are conceited of themselves and lean on the broken reed of their own understanding.

IV. The general intention of this vision. Without a critical descant upon every circumstance of the vision, the design of it is to assure the prophet, and by him the people, that this good work of building the temple should, by the special care of divine Providence, and the immediate influence of divine grace, be brought to a happy issue, though the enemies of it were many and

mighty and the friends and furtherers of it few and feeble. Note, In the explication of visions and parables, we must look at the principal scope of them, and be satisfied with that, if that be clear, though we may not be able to account for every circumstance, or accommodate it to our purpose. The angel lets the prophet know, in general, that this vision was designed to illustrate a word which the Lord had to say to Zerubbabel, to encourage him to go on with the building of the temple. Let him know that he is a worker together with God in it, and that it is a work which God will own and crown.

1. God will carry on and complete this work, as he had begun their deliverance from Babylon, not by external force, but by secret operations and internal influences upon the minds of men. *He* says this who is the *Lord of hosts*, and could do it *vi et armis—by force*, has legions at command; but he will do it, *not by human might or power*, but *by his own Spirit*. What is done by his Spirit is done by might and power, but it stands in opposition to visible force. Israel was brought out of Egypt, and into Canaan, by might and power; in both these works of wonder great slaughter was made. But they were brought out of Babylon, and into Canaan the second time, *by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts* working upon the spirit of Cyrus, and inclining him to proclaim liberty to them, and working upon the spirits of the captives, and inclining them to accept the liberty offered them. It was by the *Spirit of the Lord of hosts* that the people were excited and animated to build the temple; and *therefore* they are said to be *helped by the prophets of God*, because they, as the Spirit's mouth, spoke to their hearts, Ezra 5:2. It was by the same Spirit that the heart of Darius was inclined to favour and further that good work and that the sworn enemies of it were infatuated in their councils, so that they could not hinder it as they designed. Note, The work of God is often carried on very successfully when yet it is carried on very silently, and without the assistance of human force; the gospel-temple is built, not by might or power (for *the weapons of our warfare are not carnal*), but by the *Spirit of the Lord of hosts*, whose work on men's consciences is mighty to the pulling down of strong-holds; thus the excellency of the power is of God, and not of man. When instruments fail, let us therefore leave it to God to do his work himself by his own Spirit.

2. All the difficulties and oppositions that lie in the way shall be got over and removed, even those that seem insuperable (v. 7): *Who art thou, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain*. See here, (1.) How the difficulty is represented; it is a *great mountain*, impassable and immovable, a heap of rubbish, like a great mountain, which must be got away, or the work cannot go on. The enemies of the Jews are proud and hard as great mountains; but, when God has work to do, the mountains that stand in the way of it shall dwindle into mole-hills; for see here, (2.) How these difficulties are despised: *"Who art thou, O great mountain! that thou shouldst stand in God's way and think to stop the progress of his work? Who art thou that lookest so big, that thus threatenest, and art thus feared? Before Zerubbabel, when he is God's agent, thou shalt become a plain*. All the difficulties shall vanish, and all the objections be got over. *Every mountain and hill shall be brought low when the way of the Lord is to be prepared,"* Isa. 40:4. Faith will remove mountains and make them plains. Christ is our Zerubbabel; mountains of difficulty were in the way of his undertaking, but before him they were all levelled; nothing is too hard for his grace to do.

3. The same hand that has begun this good work will perform it: *He shall bring forth the head-stone* (v. 7); and again (v. 9), *The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house*, be it spoken to his honour (perhaps with his own hands he laid

the first stone), and though it has been long retarded, and is still much opposed, yet it shall be finished at last; he shall live to see it finished, nay, and *his hands shall also finish it*; herein he is a type of Christ, who is both the *author* and the *finisher of our faith*; and his being the *author* of it is an assurance to us that he will be the *finisher*, for, *as for God, his work is perfect*; has he begun and shall he not make an end? Zerubbabel shall himself *bring forth the head-stone with shoutings*, and loud acclamations of joy, among the spectators. The acclamations are not *huzzas*, but *Grace, grace*; that is the burden of the triumphant songs which the church sings. It may be taken, (1.) As magnifying free grace, and giving to that all the glory of what is done. When the work is finished it must be thankfully acknowledged that it was not by any policy or power of our own that it was brought to perfection, but that it was grace that did it—God's good-will towards us and his good work in us and for us. *Grace, grace*, must be cried, not only to the head-stone, but to the foundation-stone, the corner-stone, and indeed to every stone in God's building; from first to last it is nothing of works, but all of grace, and all our crowns must be cast at the feet of free grace. *Not unto us, O Lord! not unto us.* (2.) As depending upon free grace, and desiring the continuance of it, for what is yet to be done. *Grace, grace*, is the language of prayer as well as of praise; now that this building is finished, all happiness attend it! Peace be within its walls, and, in order to that, *grace*. Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon it! Note, What comes from the grace of God may, in faith, and upon good grounds, be committed to the grace of God, for God will not forsake the work of his own hands.

4. This shall be a full ratification of the prophecies which went before concerning the Jews' return, and their settlement again. When the temple is finished then *thou shalt know that the Lord of hosts has sent me unto you*. Note, The exact accomplishment of scripture prophecies is a convincing proof of their divine original. Thus God *confirms the word of his servant*, by *saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built*, Isa. 44:26. No word of God shall fall to the ground, nor shall there fail one iota or tittle of it. Zechariah's prophecies of the approaching day of deliverance to the church would soon appear, by the accomplishment of them, to be of God.

5. This shall effectually silence those that looked with contempt upon the beginning of this work, v. 10. Who, where, is he now that despised the day of small things, and thought this work would never come to any thing? The Jews themselves despised the foundation of the second temple, because it was likely to be so far inferior to the first, Ezra 3:12. Their enemies despised the wall when it was in the building, Neh. 2:19; 4:2, 3. But let them not do it. Note, In God's work the day of small things is not to be despised. Though the instruments be weak and unlikely, God often chooses such, by them to bring about great things. As a great mountain becomes a plain before him when he pleases, so a little stone, cut out of a mountain without hands, comes to fill the earth, Dan. 2:35. Though the beginnings be small, God can make the latter end greatly to increase; a grain of mustard-seed may become a great tree. Let not the dawning light be despised, for it will shine more and more to the perfect day. The day of small things is the day of precious things, and will be the day of great things.

6. This shall abundantly satisfy all the hearty well-wishers to God's interest, who will be glad to see themselves mistaken in *despising the day of small things*. Those that despaired of the finishing of the work shall rejoice when they *see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel*, when they see him busy among the builders, giving orders and directions what to do, and taking care

that the work be done with great exactness, that it may be both fine and firm. Note, It is matter of great rejoicing to all good people to see magistrates careful and active for the edifying of the house of God, to see the plummet in the hand of those who have power to do much, if they have but a heart according to it; we see not Zerubbabel with the trowel in his hand (that is left to the workmen, the ministers), but we see him with the plummet in his hand, and it is no disparagement, but an honour to him. Magistrates are to inspect ministers' work, and to speak comfortably to the Levites that do their duty.

7. This shall highly magnify the wisdom and care of God's providence, which is always employed for the good of his church. Zerubbabel does his part, does as much as man can do to forward the work, but it is *with those seven, those seven eyes of the Lord* which we read of ch. 3:9. He could do nothing if the watchful, powerful, gracious providence of God did not go before him and go along with him in it. Except the Lord had built this house, Zerubbabel and the rest would have *laboured in vain*, Ps. 127:1. These *eyes of the Lord* are those that *run to and fro through the whole earth*, that take cognizance of all the creatures and all their actions (2 Chr. 16:9), and inspire and direct all, according to the divine counsels. Note, We must not think that God is so taken up with the affairs of his church as to neglect the world; but it is a comfort to us that the same all-wise almighty Providence that governs the nations of the earth is in a particular manner conversant about the church. Those *seven eyes that run through the earth* are all *upon the stone* that Zerubbabel is laying straight with his plummet, to see that it be well laid. And those that have the plummet in their hand must look up to *those eyes of the Lord*, must have a constant regard to divine Providence, and act in dependence upon its guidance and submission to its disposals.

Verses 11-14

Enough is said to Zechariah to encourage him, and to enable him to encourage others, with reference to the good work of building the temple which they were now about, and that was the principal intention of the vision he saw; but still he is inquisitive about the particulars, which we will ascribe, not to any vain curiosity, but to the value he had for divine discoveries and the pleasure he took in acquainting himself with them. Those that know much of the things of God cannot but have a humble desire to know more. Now observe,

I. What his enquiry was. He understood the meaning of the candlestick with its lamps: It is Jerusalem, it is the temple, and their salvation that is to *go forth as a lamp that burns*; but he wants to know what are these *two olive-trees* (v. 11), these *two olive-branches*? v. 12. Observe here, 1. He asked. Note, Those that would be acquainted with the things of God must be inquisitive concerning those things. Ask, and you shall be told. 2. He asked twice, his first question having no reply given to it. Note, If satisfactory answers be not given to our enquiries and requests quickly, we must renew them, and repeat them, and continue instant and importunate in them, and the vision shall at length *speak, and not lie*. 3. His second query varied somewhat from the former. He first asked, What are *these two olive-trees*, but afterwards, *What are these two olive-branches*? that is, those boughs of the tree that hung over the bowl and distilled oil into it. When we enquire concerning the grace of God, it must be rather as it is communicated to us by the fruitful boughs of the word and ordinances (for that is one of the *things revealed, which belong to us and to our children*) than as it is resident in the good olive where all our springs are, for that is one of the *secret things, which belong not to us*. 4. In his enquiry he mentioned the observations he had made upon the vision; he took

notice not only of what was obvious at first sight, that the two olive-trees grew, one *on the right side and the other on the left side of the candlestick* (so nigh, so ready, is divine grace to the church), but he observed further, upon a more narrow inspection, that the *two olive-branches*, from which in particular the candlestick did receive of *the root and fatness of the olive* (as the apostle says of the church, Rom. 11:17), did empty the *golden oil* (that is, the clear bright oil, the best in its kind, and of great value, as if it were *aurum potabile—liquid gold*) *out of themselves through the two golden pipes*, or (as the margin reads it) which *by the hand of the two golden pipes empty out of themselves oil into the gold*, that is, into the *golden bowl* on the head of the candlestick. Our Lord Jesus emptied himself, to fill us; his precious blood is the golden oil in which we are supplied with all we need.

II. What answer was given to his enquiry. Now again the angel obliged him expressly to own his ignorance, before he informed him (v. 13): "*Knowest thou not what these are?* If thou knowest the church to be the candlestick, canst thou think the olive-trees, that supply it with oil, to be any other than the grace of God?" But he owned he either did not fully understand it or was afraid he did not rightly understand it: *I said, No, my Lord, how should I, except some one guide me?* And then he told him (v. 14): *These are the two sons of oil* (so it is in the original), *the two anointed ones* (so we read it), rather, *the two oily ones*. That which we read (Isa. 5:1) a *very fruitful hill* is in the original *the horn of the son of oil*, a fat and fattening soil. 1. If by the candlestick we understand the visible church, particularly that of the Jews at that time, for whose comfort it was primarily intended, these *sons of oil*, that *stand before the Lord of the whole earth*, are the two great ordinances and offices of the magistracy and ministry, at that time lodged in the hands of those two great and good men Zerubbabel and Joshua. Kings and priests were anointed; this prince, this priest, were *oily ones*, endued with the gifts and graces of God's Spirit, to qualify them for the work to which they were called. They *stood before the Lord of the whole earth*, to minister to him, and to receive direction from him; and a great influence they had upon the affairs of the church at that time. Their wisdom, courage, and zeal, were continually emptying themselves into the golden bowl, to keep the lamps burning; and, when they are gone, others shall be raised up to carry on the same work; Israel shall no longer be without prince and priest. Good magistrates and good ministers that are themselves anointed with the grace of God and *stand by the Lord of the whole earth*, as faithful adherents to his cause, contribute very much to the maintaining and advancing of religion and the shining forth of the word of life. 2. If by the candlestick we understand the church of the first-born, of true believers, these sons of oil may be meant of Christ and the Spirit, the Redeemer and the Comforter. Christ is not only the Messiah, the *Anointed One* himself, but he is the *good olive* to his church; and *from his fulness we receive*, Jn. 1:16. And the Holy Spirit is the *unction or anointing* which we have received, 1 Jn. 2:20, 27. From Christ, the *olive tree*, by the *Spirit, the olive branch*, all the golden oil of grace is communicated to believers, which keeps their lamps burning, and without a constant supply of which they would soon go out. They *stand by the Lord of the whole earth*, who is in a special manner the church's Lord; for the Son was to be sent by the Father, and so was the Holy Ghost, in the time appointed, and they stand by him ready to go.

Chapter 5

Hitherto we have seen visions of peace only, and all the words we have heard have been good words and comfortable words. But the pillar of cloud and fire has a black and dark side towards the Egyptians, as well as a bright and pleasant side towards Israel; so have Zechariah's visions; for God's prophets are not only his ambassadors, to treat of peace with the sons of peace, but heralds, to proclaim war against those that delight in war, and persist in their rebellion. In this chapter we have two visions, by which "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." God will do great and kind things for his people, which the faithful sons of Zion shall rejoice in; but "let the sinners in Zion be afraid;" for, I. God will reckon severely with those particular persons among them that are wicked and profane, and that hated to be reformed in these times of reformation; while God is showing kindness to the body of the nation, and loading that with his blessings, they and their families shall, notwithstanding that, lie under the curse, which the prophet sees in a flying roll (v. 1-4). II. If the body of the nation hereafter degenerate, and wickedness prevail among them, it shall be carried off and hurried away with a swift destruction, under the pressing weight of divine wrath, represented by a talent of lead upon the mouth of an ephah, carried upon the wing I know not where (v. 5-11).

Verses 1-4

We do not find that the prophet now needed to be awakened, as he did ch. 4:1. Being awakened then, he kept wakeful after; nay, now he needs not be so much as called to look about him, for of his own accord he *turns and lifts up his eyes*. This good men sometimes get by their infirmities, they make them the more careful and circumspect afterwards. Now observe, I. What it was that the prophet saw; he looked up into the air, and *behold a flying roll*. A vast large scroll of parchment which had been rolled up, and is therefore called a *roll*, was now unrolled and expanded; this roll was flying upon the wings of the wind, carried swiftly through the air in open view, as an eagle that shoots down upon her prey; it was a *roll*, like Ezekiel's that was *written within and without with lamentations, and mourning, and woe*, Eze. 2:9, 10. As the command of the law is in writing, for certainty and perpetuity, so is the *curse of the law*; it *writes bitter things* against the sinner. "What I have written I have written and what is written remains." The angel, to engage the prophet's attention, and to raise in him a desire to have it explained, asks him *what he sees?* And he gives him this account of it: *I see a flying roll*, and as near as he can guess by his eye it is *twenty cubits long* (that is, ten yards) and *ten cubits broad*, that is, five yards. The scriptures of the Old Testament and the New are *rolls*, in which God has *written to us the great things of his law* and gospel. Christ is the Master of the rolls. They are large rolls, have much in them. They are *flying rolls*; the angel that had *the everlasting gospel to preach flew in the midst of heaven*, Rev. 14:6. God's word *runs very swiftly*, Ps. 147:15. Those that would be let into the meaning of these rolls must first tell what they see, must go as far as they can themselves. "*What is written in the law? how readest thou?* Tell me that, and then thou shalt be made to *understand what thou readest.*"

II. How it was expounded to him, 5:3,4. This flying roll is a *curse*; it contains a declaration of the righteous wrath of God against those sinners especially who by swearing affront God's majesty or by stealing invade their neighbour's property. Let

every Israelite rejoice in the blessings of his country with trembling; for if he swear, if he steal, if he live in any course of sin, he shall see them with his eyes, but shall not have the comfort of them, for against him the curse has gone forth. *If I be wicked, woe to me* for all this. Now observe here,

1. The extent of this curse; the prophet sees it flying, but which way does it steer its course? *It goes forth over the face of the whole earth*, not only of the land of Israel, but the *whole world*; for those that have sinned against the *law written in their hearts* only shall by that law be judged, though they have not the book of the law. Note, All mankind are liable to the judgment of God; and, wherever sinners are, any where upon the face of the whole earth, the curse of God can and will find them out and seize them. Oh that we could with an eye of faith see the flying roll of God's curse hanging over the guilty world as a thick cloud, not only keeping off the sun-beams of God's favour from them, but big with thunders, lightnings, and storms, ready to destroy them! How welcome then would the tidings of a Saviour be, who came to *redeem us from the curse of the law* by being himself *made a curse for us*, and, like the prophet, *eating this roll!* The vast length and breadth of this roll intimate what a multitude of curses sinners lie exposed to. God will make their plagues wonderful, if *they turn not*.

2. The criminals against whom particularly this curse is levelled. The world is full of sin in great variety: so was the Jewish church at this time. But two sorts of sinners are here specified as the objects of this curse:—(1.) Thieves; it is *for every one that steals*, that by fraud or force takes that which is not his own, especially that robs God and converts to his own use what was devoted to God and his honour, which was a sin much complained of among the Jews at this time, Mal. 3:8; Neh. 13:10. Sacrilege is, without doubt, the worst kind of thievery. He also that *robs his father or mother, and saith, It is no transgression* (Prov. 28:24), let him know that against him this curse is directed, for it is against *every one that steals*. The letter of the eighth commandment has no penalty annexed to it; but the curse here is a sanction to that command. (2.) Swearers. Sinners of the former class offend against the second table, these against the first; for the curse meets those that break either table. He that swears rashly and profanely shall not be held guiltless, much less he that swears falsely (v. 4); he imprecates the curse upon himself by his perjury, and so shall his doom be; God will say *Amen* to his imprecation, and turn it upon his own head. He has appealed to God's judgment, which is always according to truth, for the confirming of a lie, and to that judgment he shall go which he has so impiously affronted.

3. The enforcing of this curse, and the equity of it: *I will bring it forth, saith the Lord of hosts, 5:4*. He that pronounces the sentence will take care to see it executed. His bringing it forth denotes, (1.) His giving it commission. It is a righteous curse, for he is a righteous God that warrants it. (2.) His giving it the setting on. He brings it forth with power, and orders what execution it shall do; and who can put by or resist the curse which a God of almighty power brings forth?

4. The effect of this curse; it is very dreadful, (1.) Upon the sinner himself: *Every one that steals shall be cut off*, not corrected, but destroyed, cut off from the land of the living. The curse of God is a cutting thing, a killing thing. He shall be cut off *as on this side* (cut off from this place, that is, from Jerusalem), and so he that swears from *this side* (it is the same word), from this place. God will not spare the sinners he finds among his own people, nor shall the holy city be a protection to the unholy. Or they shall be cut off *from hence*, that is, from the face of the whole earth, over which the curse flies. Or he that steals shall be

cut off on this side, and he that swears *on that side*; they shall all be cut off, one as well as another, and both according to the curse, for the judgments of God's hand are exactly agreeable with the judgments of his mouth. (2.) Upon his family: *It shall enter into the house of the thief and of him that swears*. God's curse comes with a warrant to break open doors, and cannot be kept out by bars or locks. There where the sinner is most secure, and thinks himself out of danger,—there where he promises himself refreshment by food and sleep,—there, in his own house, shall the curse of God seize him; nay, it shall fall not upon him only, but upon all about him for his sake. *Cursed shall be his basket and his store, and cursed the fruit of his body*, Deu. 28:17, 18. *The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked*, Prov. 3:33. It shall not only beset his house, or he at the door, but *it shall remain in the midst of his house*, and diffuse its malignant influences to all the parts of it. *It shall dwell in his tabernacle because it is none of his*, Job 18:15. It shall dwell where he dwells, and be his constant companion at bed and board, to make both miserable to him. Having got possession, it shall keep it, and, unless he repent and reform, there is no way to throw it out or cut off the entail of it. Nay, it shall so remain in it as to *consume it with the timber thereof, and the stones thereof*, which, though ever so strong, though the timber be heart of oak and the stones hewn out of the rocks of adamant, yet they shall not be able to stand before the curse of God. We heard the stone and the timber complaining of the owner's extortion and oppression, and groaning under the burden of them, Hab. 2:11. Now here we have them delivered *from that bondage of corruption*. While they were in their strength and beauty they supported, sorely against their will, the sinner's pride and security; but, when they are consumed, their ruins will, to their satisfaction, be standing monuments of God's justice and lasting witnesses of the sinner's injustice. Note, Sin is the ruin of houses and families, especially the sins of injury and perjury. *Who knows the power of God's anger*, and the operations of his curse? Even timber and stones have been consumed by them; let us therefore stand in awe and not sin.

Verses 5-11

The foregoing vision was very plain and easy, but in this are things *dark and hard to be understood*; and some think that the scope of it is to foretel the final destruction of the Jewish church and nation and the dispersion of the Jews, when, by crucifying Christ and persecuting his gospel, they should have filled up the measure of their iniquities; therefore it is industriously set out in obscure figures and expressions, "lest the plain denunciation of the second overthrow of temple and state might discourage them too much from going forward in the present restoration of both." So Mr. Pemble.

The prophet was contemplating the power and terror of the curse which consumes the houses of thieves and swearers, when he was told to turn and he should see greater desolations than these made by the curse of God for the sin of man: *Lift up thy eyes now*, and see what is here, v. 5. *What is this that goeth forth?* Whether over the face of the whole earth, as the flying roll (v. 3), or only over Jerusalem, is not certain. But, it seems, the prophet now, through either the distance or the dimness of his sight, could not well tell what it was, but asked, *What is it?* v. 6. And the angel tells him both what it is and what it means.

I. He sees an *ephah*, a measure wherewith they measured corn; it contained *ten omers* (Ex. 16:36) and was the tenth part of a *homer* (Eze. 45:11); it is put for any measure used in commerce, Deu. 25:14. And *this is their resemblance*, the resemblance of the Jewish nation *over all the earth*, wherever they are now dispersed, or at least it will be so when their ruin draws near. They

are filling up the measure of their iniquity, which God has set them; and when it is full, as the ephah of corn, they shall be delivered into the hands of those to whom God has sold them for their sins; they are *meted* to destruction, as an ephah of corn measured to the market or to the mill. And some think that the mentioning of an ephah, which is used in buying and selling, intimates that fraud, and deceit, and extortion in commerce, were sins abounding much among them, as that people are known to be notoriously guilty of them at this day. This is a proper representation of them *through all the earth*. There is a measure set them, and they are filling it up apace. See Mt. 23:32; 1 Th. 2:16.

II. He sees a *woman sitting in the midst of the ephah*, representing the sinful church and nation of the Jews in their latter and degenerate age, when *the faithful city became a harlot*. He that weighs the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance measures nations and churches as in an ephah; so exact is he in his judicial dealings with them. God's people are called *the corn of his floor*, Isa. 21:10. And here he puts this corn into the bushel, in order to his parting with it. The angel says of the woman in the *ephah*, *This is wickedness*; it is a wicked nation, else God would not have rejected it thus; it is as wicked as *wickedness* itself, it is abominably wicked. *How has the gold become dim! Israel was holiness to the Lord* (Jer. 2:3); but now *this is wickedness*, and wickedness is nowhere so scandalous, so odious, and, in many instances, so outrageous, as when it is found among professors of religion.

III. He sees the woman thrust down into the ephah, and a *talent*, or large weight, *of lead*, cast upon the *mouth* of it, by which she is secured, and made a close prisoner in the *ephah*, and utterly disabled to get out of it. This is designed to show that the wrath of God against impenitent sinners is, 1. Unavoidable, and what they cannot escape; they are bound over to it, concluded under sin, and shut up under the curse, as this woman in the ephah; *he would fain flee out of his hand* (Job 27:22), but he cannot. 2. It is insupportable, and what they cannot bear up under. Guilt is upon the sinner as a talent of lead, to sink him to the lowest hell. When Christ said of the things of Jerusalem's peace, *Now they are hidden from thy eyes*, that threw a talent of lead upon them.

IV. He sees the ephah, with the woman thus pressed to death in it, carried away into some far country. 1. The instruments employed to do it were *two women*, who had *wings like those of a stork*, large and strong, and, to make them fly the more swiftly, they had the *wind in their wings*, denoting the great violence and expedition with which the Romans destroyed the Jewish nation. God has not only winged messengers in heaven, but he can, when he pleases, give wings to those also whom he employs in this lower world; and, when he does so, he forwards them with the wind in their wings; his providence carries them on with a favourable gale. 2. They bore it up in the air, denoting the terrors which pursued the wicked Jews, and their being a public example of God's vengeance to the world. They *lifted it up between the earth and the heaven*, as unworthy of either and abandoned by both; for the Jews, when this was fulfilled, *pleased not God and were contrary to all men*, 1 Th. 2:15. *This is wickedness*, and this comes of it; heaven thrust out wicked angels, and earth spewed out wicked Canaanites. 3. When the prophet enquired whither they carried their prisoner whom they had now in execution (v. 10) he was told that they designed *to build it a house in the land of Shinar*. This intimates that the punishment of the Jews should be a final dispersion; they should be hurried out of their own country, *as the chaff which the wind drives away*, and should be forced to dwell in far countries,

particularly in the country of Babylon, whither many of the scattered Jews went after the destruction of their country by the Romans, as they did also to other countries, especially in the Levant parts, not to sojourn, as in their former captivity, for seventy years, but to be nailed down for perpetuity. There the *ephah* shall *be established, and set upon her own base*. This intimates, (1.) That their calamity shall continue from generation to generation, and that they shall be so dispersed that they shall never unite or incorporate again; they shall settle in a perpetual unsettlement, and Cain's doom shall be theirs, to dwell in the land of shaking. (2.) That their iniquity shall continue too, and their hearts shall be hardened in it. *Blindness* has *happened* unto Israel, and they are settled upon the lees of their own unbelief; their wickedness is established upon its *own basis*. God has given them a *spirit of slumber* (Rom. 11:8), *lest at any time they should convert, and be healed*.

Chapter 6

The two kingdoms of providence and grace are what we are all very nearly interested in, and therefore are concerned to acquaint ourselves with, all our temporal affairs being in a necessary subjection to divine Providence, and all our spiritual and eternal concerns in a necessary dependence upon divine grace; and these two are represented to us in this chapter—the former by a vision, the latter by a type. Here is, I. God, as King of nations, ruling the world by the ministry of angels, in the vision of the four chariots (v. 1-8). II. God, as King of saints, ruling the church by the mediation of Christ, in the figure of Joshua the high priest crowned, the ceremony performed, and then explained concerning Christ (v. 9–15).

Verses 1-8

The prophet is forward to receive this vision, and, as if he expected it, he *turned and lifted up his eyes and looked*. Though this was the seventh vision he had had, yet he did not think he had had enough; for the more we know of God and his will, if we know it aright, the more desirous we shall be to get a further acquaintance with God. Now observe here the sight that the prophet had of *four chariots* drawn by horses of divers colours, together with the explication of the sight, v. 1-5. He did not look long before he discovered that which was worth seeing, and which would serve very much for the encouraging of himself and his friends in this dark day. We are very much in the dark concerning the meaning of this vision. Some by the *four chariots* understand the four monarchies; and then they read (v. 5), *These are the four winds of the heavens*, and suppose that therein reference is had to Dan. 7:2, where Daniel saw, in vision, the *four winds of the heavens striving upon the great sea*, representing the four monarchies. The Babylonian monarchy, they think, is here represented by the *red horses*, which are not afterwards mentioned, because that monarchy was now extinct. The second chariot with the *black horses* is the Persian monarchy, which went forth northward against the Babylonians, and *quieted God's Spirit in the north country*, by executing his judgments on Babylon and freeing the Jews from their captivity. The *white*, the Grecians, *go forth after them* in the north, for they overthrow the Persians. The *grizzled*, the Romans, who conquered the Grecian empire, are said to *go forth towards the south country*, because Egypt, which lay southward, was the last branch of the Grecian empire that was subdued by the Romans. The *bay horses* had been with the *grizzled*, but afterwards went forth by themselves; and by these they understand the Goths and Vandals, who with their victorious arms walked to and fro through the earth, or the Seleucidae and Lagidae, the two branches of the Grecian empire. Thus Grotius and others.

But I incline rather to understand this vision more generally, as designing to represent the administration of the kingdom of Providence in the government of this lower world. The *angels* are often called the *chariots of God*, as Ps. 68:17; 18:10. The various providences of God concerning nations and churches are represented by the different colours of horses, Rev. 6:2, 4, 5, 8. And so we may observe here, 1. That the counsels and decrees of God are the spring and original of all events, and they are immovable, as *mountains of brass*. The *chariots came from between the two mountains*; for *God performs the thing that is appointed for us*: his appointments are the originals, and his performances are but copies from them; he does all *according to the counsel of his will*. We could as soon grasp the mountains in our arms as comprehend the divine counsels in our finite

understandings, and as soon remove *mountains of brass* as alter any of God's purposes; for *he is in one mind, and who can turn him?* Whatever the providences of God are concerning us, as to public or private affairs, we should see them all coming from *between the mountains of brass*, and therefore see it as much our folly to quarrel with them as it is our duty to acquiesce in them. Who may say to God, *What doest thou, or why doest thou so?* Acts 2:23; 4:28. 2. That God executes his decrees in the works of Providence, which are as chariots, in which he rides as a prince in an open chariot, to show his glory to the world, in which, as in chariots of war, he rides forth *conquering and to conquer*, and triumphing over all the enemies of his glory and government. God is great and terrible in his doings (Ps. 66:3), and in them we *see the goings of our God, our King*, Ps. 68:24. His providences move swiftly and strongly as chariots, but all directed and governed by his infinite wisdom and sovereign will, as chariots by their drivers. 3. That the holy angels are the ministers of God's providence, and are employed by him, as *the armies of heaven*, for the executing of his counsels among *the inhabitants of the earth*; they are the *chariots*, or, which comes all to one, they are the horses that draw the chariots, great in power and might, and who, like the horse that God himself describes (Job 39:19, etc.), are clothed with thunder, are terrible, but cannot be *terrified nor made afraid*; they are *chariots of fire, and horses of fire*, to carry one prophet to heaven and guard another on earth. They are as observant of and obsequious to the will of God as well-managed horses are to their rider or driver. Not that God needs them or their services, but he is pleased to make use of them, that he may put honour upon them, and encourage our trust in his providence. 4. That the events of Providence have different aspects and the face of the times often changes. The *horses in the first chariot were red*, signifying war and bloodshed, *blood to the horse-bridles*, Rev. 14:20. Those in the *second chariot were black*, signifying the dismal melancholy consequences of war; it puts all into mourning, lays all waste, introduces famines, and pestilences, and desolations, and makes whole lands to languish. Those in the *third chariot were white*, signifying the return of comfort, and peace, and prosperity, after these dark and dismal times: though God cause grief to the children of men, yet will he have compassion. Those in the *fourth chariot were of a mixed colour, grizzled and bay*; some *speckled and spotted, and ash-coloured*, signifying events of different complexions interwoven and counter-changed, a day of prosperity and a day of adversity set *the one over-against the other*. The cup of Providence in the hand of the Lord is *full of mixture*, Ps. 75:8. 5. That all the instruments of Providence, and all the events of it, come from God, and from him they receive their commissions and instructions (v. 5): *These are the four spirits of heaven, the four winds* (so some), which seem to blow as they list, from the various points of the compass; but God has them *in his fists* and brings them out of *his treasuries*. Or, rather, These are *the angels that go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth*, to attend upon him and minister to him, to behold his glory in the upper world, which is their blessedness, and to serve his glory in their blessedness, and to serve his glory in this lower world, which is their business. They *stand before him* as the *Lord of the whole earth*, to receive orders from him and give up their accounts to him concerning their services on this earth, for it is all within his jurisdiction. But, when he appoints, they *go forth* as messengers of his counsels and ministers of his justice and mercy. Those secret motions and impulses upon the spirits of men by which the designs of Providence are carried on, some think, are these *four spirits of the heavens*, which *go forth from God* and fulfil what he appoints, who is *the God of the spirits of all flesh*. 6. That there is an admirable beauty in Providence, and one event serves

for a balance to another (v. 6): *The black horses went forth*, carrying with them very dark and melancholy events, such as made every person and every thing look black; but presently *the white went forth after them*, carrying joy to those that mourned, and, by a new turn given to affairs, making them to look pleasant again. Such are God's dealings with his church and people: if the black horses go forth, the white ones presently go after them; for *as affliction abounds consolation much more abounds*. 7. That the common general aspect of providence is mixed and compounded. The *grizzled* and *bay horses* were both in the *fourth chariot* (v. 3), and though they went forth, at first, towards the *south country*, yet afterwards they *sought to walk to and fro through the earth* and were directed to do so, v. 7. If we go to and fro through the earth, we shall find the events of Providence neither all black nor all white, but ash-coloured, or gray, mixed of black and white. Such is the world we live in; that before us is unmixed. Here we are singing, at the same time, of *mercy and judgment*, and we must *sing unto God* of both (Ps. 101:1) and labour to accommodate ourselves to God's will and design in the mixtures of Providence, rejoicing in our comforts as though we rejoiced not, because they have their allays, and weeping for our afflictions as though we wept not, because there is so much mercy mixed with them. 8. That God is well-pleased with all the operations of his own providence (v. 8): *These have quieted my spirit*, these *black horses* which denote extraordinary judgments, and the *white* ones which denote extraordinary deliverances, both which *went towards the north country*, while the common mixed providences went all the world over. These have *quieted my spirit in the north-country*, which had of late been the most remarkable scene of action with reference to the church; that is, by these uncommon appearances and actings of providence God's wrath is executed upon the enemies of the church, and his favours are conferred upon the church, both which had long been deferred, and in both God had fulfilled his will, accomplished his word, and so *quieted his Spirit*. *The Lord is well-pleased for his righteousness' sake*; and, as he speaks, Isa. 1:24, made himself easy.

Verses 9-15

God did not only at *sundry times*, but in *divers manners*, speak in time past by the prophets to his church. In the former part of this chapter he spoke by a vision, which only the prophet himself saw; here, in this latter part, he speaks by a sign, or type, which many saw, and which, as it was explained, was an illustrious prediction of the Messiah as the priest and king of his church. Here is,

I. The significant ceremony which God appointed, and that was the *coronation of Joshua* the high priest, v. 10, 11. It is observable that there should be two eminent types of Christ in the Old Testament that were both named *Joshua* (the same name with *Jesus*, and by the Septuagint, and in the New Testament, rendered *Jesus*, Acts 7:45)—Joshua the chief captain, a type of Christ the captain of our salvation, and Joshua the chief priest, a type of Christ the high priest of our profession, and both in their day saviours and leaders into Canaan. And this is peculiar to Joshua the high priest, that here was something done to him by the divine appointment on purpose that he might be a type of Christ, a priest after the order of Melchizedek, who was both a king and a priest. Joshua was far from being ambitious of a crown, and the people of having a crowned head over them; but the prophet, to the great surprise of both, is ordered to crown Joshua as if he had been a king. And, as Zerubbabel's prudence and piety kept this from being any affront to him (as the setting up of a rival with him), so God's providence kept the kings of

Persia from taking umbrage at it, as raising a rebellion against them. In doing what we are sure is God's pleasure, as this was, we may well venture men's displeasure. 1. Here were some Jews come from Babylon that brought an offering to the house of God, *some of the captivity*, here named to their honour, that *came from Babylon* on a visit to Jerusalem. They ought to have bidden a final farewell to Babylon, and to have come and settled with their brethren in their own land, and for their remissness and indifference in not doing so they thought to atone by this visit. Perhaps they came as ambassadors from the body of the Jews that were in Babylon, who lived there in ease and fulness; and, hearing that the building of the temple went on slowly for want of money, they sent them with an offering of gold and silver for the service of the house of God. Note, Those that by reason of distance, or otherwise, cannot forward a good work by their persons, must, as they are able, forward it by their purses; if some find hands, let others fill them. 2. Time and place are appointed for the prophet to meet them. They thought to bring their present to the priest, God's ordinary minister; but God has a prophet, an extraordinary one, ready to receive them and it, which would be an encouragement to them, who, in their captivity, had so often complained, *We see not our signs, there is no more any prophet*, and would invite them and others to re-settle in their own land, which then began to look like itself, like a holy land, when the Spirit of prophecy was revived in it. Zechariah was ordered to give them the meeting *the same day* they came (for when they had arrived they would *lose no time*, but present their offering immediately), and to bid them welcome, assuring them that God now accepted their gifts. He was to meet them in the house of Josiah, the son of Zephaniah, who probably was receiver-general for the temple, and kept the treasures of it. They brought their gold and silver, to be employed about the temple, but God ordered it to be used in honour of One *greater than the temple*, Mt. 12:6. 3. Crowns are to be *made*, and *put upon the head of Joshua*, v. 11. It is supposed that there were two crowns provided, one of silver and the other of gold; the former (as some think) denoting his priestly dignity, the latter his kingly dignity. Or, rather, he being a priest already, and having a crown of gold, of pure gold, already, to signify his honour and power as a priest, these crowns of silver and gold both signify the *royal dignity*, the crown of silver being perhaps designed to typify the kingdom of the Messiah when he was here on earth, for then he was the *King of Israel* (Jn. 1:49), but the crown of gold his kingdom in his exalted state, the glory of which as far exceeded that of the former as gold does silver. The sun shines as gold, when he *goes forth in his strength*; and the beams of the moon, when she *walks in brightness*, we call *silver beams*. Those that had worshipped the sun and moon shall now fall down before the golden and silver crowns of the exalted Redeemer, before whom the sun shall be ashamed and the moon confounded, being both out-shone.

II. The signification which God gave of this ceremony. Every one would be ready to ask, "What is the meaning of Joshua's being crowned thus?" And the prophet is as ready to tell them the meaning of it. Upon this speaking sign is grafted a prediction, and the sign was used to make it the more taken notice of and the better remembered. Now the promise is,

1. That God will, in the fulness of time, raise up a great high priest, like Joshua. Tell Joshua that he is but the figure of one that is to come, a faint shadow of him (v. 12): *Speak unto him* in the name of *the Lord of hosts*, that *the man whose name is The BRANCH* shall *grow up out of his place*, out of Bethlehem the city of David, the place appointed for his birth; though the family be a root in a dry ground, yet this branch shall spring out of it, as in the spring, when the sun returns, the flowers spring

out of the roots, in which they lay buried out of sight and out of mind. He shall *grow up for himself* (so some read it) *propria virtute—by his own vital energy*, shall be exalted *in his own strength*.

2. That, as Joshua was an active useful instrument in building the temple, so *the man, the branch*, shall be the master-builder, the sole builder of the spiritual temple, the gospel-church. He *shall build the temple of the Lord*; and it is repeated (v. 13), *Even he shall build the temple of the Lord*. He shall grow up to do good, to be an instrument of God's glory and a great blessing to mankind. Note, The gospel-church is the *temple of the Lord, a spiritual house* (1 Pt. 2:5), a *holy temple*, Eph. 2:21. In the temple God made discoveries of himself to his people, and there he received the service and homage of his people; so, in the gospel-church, the light of divine revelation shines by the word, and the spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise are offered. Now Christ is not only the foundation, but the founder, of this temple, by his Spirit and grace.

3. That Christ shall bear the glory. Glory is a burden, but not too heavy for him to bear who upholds all things. The cross was his glory, and he bore that; so was the crown *an exceeding weight of glory*, and he bears that. The *government is upon his shoulders*, and in it *he bears the glory*, Isa. 9:6. *They shall hang upon him all the glory of his Father's house*, Isa. 22:24. It becomes him, and he is *par negotio—well able to bear it*. The glory of the priesthood and royalty had been divided between the house of Aaron and that of David; but now he alone shall bear all the glory of both. That which he shall bear, which he shall undertake, shall be indeed the *glory of Israel*; and they must wait for that, and, in prospect of it, must be content in the want of that external glory which they formerly had. He shall bear such a glory as shall make the glory of this latter house greater than that of the former. He shall *lift up the glory* (so it may be read); the glory of Israel had been thrown down and depressed, but he shall raise it out of the dust.

4. That he shall have a throne, and be both priest and king upon his throne. A throne denotes both dignity and dominion, an exalted honour with an extensive power. (1.) This priest shall be a king, and his office as a priest shall be no diminution to his dignity as a king: *He shall sit and rule upon his throne*. Christ, as a priest, ever lives to make intercession for us; but he does it sitting at his Father's right hand, as one having authority, Heb. 8:1. We have *such a high priest* as Israel never had, for he is *set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens*, which puts a prevailing virtue into his mediation; he that appears for us within the veil is one that sits and rules there. Christ, who is ordained to offer sacrifices for us, is authorized to give law to us. He will not save us unless we be willing that he should govern us. God has prepared him a throne *in the heavens*; and, if we would have any benefit by that, we must prepare him a throne in our hearts, and be willing and glad that he should *sit and rule upon that throne*; and to him every thought within us must be brought into obedience. (2.) This king shall be a priest, a *priest upon his throne*. With the majesty and power of a king, he shall have the tenderness and simplicity of a priest, who, being *taken from among men*, is *ordained for men*, and *can have compassion on the ignorant*, Heb. 5:1, 2. In all the acts of his government as a king he prosecutes the intentions of his grace as a priest. Let not therefore those that are his look upon his throne, though a throne of glory and a throne of judgment, with terror and amazement; for, as there is a *rainbow about the throne*, so he is a *priest upon the throne*.

5. That *the counsel of peace shall be between them both*. That is, (1.) Between *Jehovah* and the *man the branch*, between the

Father and the Son; the counsels concerning the peace to be made between God and man, by the mediation of Christ, shall be concerted (that is, shall *appear to have been* concerted) by Infinite Wisdom in the covenant of redemption; the Father and the Son understood one another perfectly well in that matter. Or, rather, (2.) Between the priest and the throne, between the priestly and kingly office of Jesus Christ. *The man the branch* must grow up to carry on a *counsel of peace*, peace on earth, and, in order to that, peace with heaven. God's thoughts towards us were *thoughts of peace*, and, in prosecution of them, he exalted his Son Christ Jesus to be *both a prince* and a *Saviour*; he gave him a throne, but with this proviso, that he should be a priest upon his throne, and by executing the two offices of a priest and king should bring about that great undertaking of man's reconciliation to God and happiness in God. Some think it alludes to the former government of the Jews' state, wherein the king and priest, separate officers, did take counsel one with another, for the maintenance of peace and prosperity in church and state, as did Zerubbabel and Joshua now. I may add, the *prophets of God helping them*. So shall the peace and welfare of the gospel-church, and of all believers, be wrought, though not by two separate persons, yet by virtue of two separate offices meeting in one—Christ purchasing all peace by his priesthood and maintaining and defending it by his kingdom; so Mr. Pemble. And his prophetic office is serviceable to both in this great design.

6. That there shall be a happy coalition between Jews and Gentiles in the gospel-church, and they shall both meet in Christ, the priest upon his throne, as the centre of their unity (v. 15): *Those that are far off shall come and build in the temple of the Lord*. Some understand it of the Jews that were now afar off in Babylon, that staid behind in captivity, to the great discouragement of their brethren that had returned, who wanted their help in building the temple. Now God promises that many of them, and some of other nations too, proselyted to the Jewish religion, should come in, and lend a helping hand to the building of the temple, and many hands would make light work. The kings of Persia contributed to the building of the temple (Ezra 6:8) and the furnishing of it, Ezra 7:19, 20. And, in after-times, Herod the Great, and others that were strangers, helped to beautify and enrich the temple. But it has a further reference to that *temple of the Lord* which *the man the branch* was to build. The Gentiles, *strangers afar off*, shall help to build it, for from among them God will raise up ministers that shall be workers together with Christ about that building; and all the Gentile converts shall be stones added to this building, so that it shall *grow up to a holy temple*, Eph. 2:20–22. When God's temple is to be built he can fetch in those that are afar off and employ them in the building of it.

7. That the accomplishment of this will be a strong confirmation of the truth of God's word: *You shall know that the Lord of hosts has sent me unto you*. That promise, that those that were afar off should come and assist them in *building the temple of the Lord*, was as it were the *giving of them a sign*; by this they might be assured that the other promises should be fulfilled in due time. This should be fulfilled now very speedily; it was so, for those that had been their enemies and accusers, in obedience to the king's edict, became their helpers and did speedily what they were ordered to do for the furtherance of the work, and by that means the work went on and was finished; see Ezra 6:13, 14. Now, by this surprising assistance which they had from afar off in building the temple, they might know that Zechariah, who told them of it before, was sent of God, and that therefore his word concerning the man the branch should be fulfilled.

8. That these promises were strong obligations to obedience: "*For this shall come to pass* (you shall have help in building the temple) *if you will diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God*. You shall have the help of foreigners in building the temple, if you will but set about it in good earnest yourselves." The assistance of others, instead of being an excuse for our slothfulness, should be a spur to our industry. "You shall have the benefit and comfort of all those promises if you make conscience of your duty." They must know that they are upon their good behaviour; and, though their God is coming towards them in a way of mercy, they cannot expect him to proceed in it unless they conform to his laws. Note, That which God requires of us, to qualify us for his favour, is obedience to his revealed will; and it must be a diligent obedience. We cannot *obey the voice of God* without a great deal of care and pains, nor will our obedience be accepted of God unless it be laboured by us.

III. The provision that was made to preserve the remembrance of this. *The crowns* that were used in this solemnity were not given to Joshua, but must be *kept for a memorial in the temple of the Lord*, v. 14. Either they were laid up in the temple treasury or (as the Jews' tradition is) they were hung up in the windows of the temple, in the view of all, *in perpetuam rei memoriam*—*for a perpetual memorial*, for a traditional evidence of the promise of the Messiah and this typical transaction used for the confirmation of that promise. The crowns were delivered to those who found the materials (and some think their names were engraven on the crowns), to be preserved as a public testimony of their pious liberality and an encouragement to others in like manner to bring presents to the house of God. Note, Various means were used for the support of the faith of the Old-Testament saints, who waited for the consolation of Israel, till the time, the set time, for it came.

Chapter 7

We have done with the visions, but not with the revelations of this book; the prophet sees no more such signs as he had seen, but still "the word of the Lord came to him." In this chapter we have, I. A case of conscience proposed to the prophet by the children of the captivity concerning fasting, whether they should continue their solemn fasts which they had religiously observed during the seventy years of their captivity (v. 1-3). II. The answer to this question, which is given in this and the next chapter; and this answer was given not all at once, but by piece-meal, and, it should seem, at several times, for here are four distinct discourses which have all of them reference to this case, each of them prefaced with "the word of the Lord came," (v. 4-8 and 8:1, 18). The method of them is very observable. In this chapter, 1. The prophet sharply reproves them for the mismanagements of their fasts (v. 4-7). 2. He exhorts them to reform their lives, which would be the best way of fasting, and to take heed of those sins which brought those judgments upon them which they kept these fasts in memory of (v. 8-14). And then in the next chapter, having searched the wound, he binds it up, and heals it, with gracious assurances of great mercy God had yet in store for them, by which he would turn their fasts into feasts.

Verses 1-7

This occasional sermon, which the prophet preached, and which is recorded in this and the next chapter, was above two years after the former, in which he gave them an account of his visions, as appears by comparing the date of this (v. 1), in the *ninth month* of the *fourth year* of Darius, with the date of that (ch. 1:1), in the eighth month of the second year of Darius; not that Zechariah was idle all that while (it is expressly said that he and Haggai continued *prophesying* till the temple was finished in the sixth year of Darius; Ezra 6:14, 15), but during that time he did not preach any sermon that was afterwards published, and left upon record, as this is. God may be honoured, his work done, and his interest served, by word of mouth as well as by writing; and by inculcating and pressing what has been taught, as well as by advancing something new. Now here we have, I. A case proposed concerning fasting. Some persons were sent to enquire of the priests and prophets whether they should continue to observe their yearly fasts, particularly that in the fifth month, as they had done. It is uncertain whether the case was put by those that yet remained in Babylon, who, being deprived of the benefit of the solemn feasts which God's ordinance appointed them, made up the want by the solemn fasts which God's providences called them to; or by those that had returned, but lived in the country, as some rather incline to think, because they are called the *people of the land*, v. 5. But, as to that, the answer given to the messengers of the captive Jews might be directed, not to them only, but to *all the people*. Observe, 1. Who they were that came with this enquiry—*Sherezer* and *Regem-melech*, persons of some rank and figure, for they came *with their men*, and did not think it below them, or any disparagement to them, to be sent on this errand, but rather an addition to their honour to be, (1.) Attendants in God's house, there to do duty and receive orders. The greatest of men are less than the least of the ordinances of Jesus Christ. (2.) Agents for God's people, to negotiate their affairs. Men of estates, having more leisure than men of business, ought to employ their time in the service of the public, and by doing good they make themselves truly great; the *messengers of the churches* were the *glory of Christ*, 2 Co. 8:23.

2. What the errand was upon which they came. They were sent perhaps not with *gold and silver* (as those, ch. 6:10, 11), or, if they were, that is not mentioned, but upon the two great errands which should bring us all to the house of God, (1.) to intercede with God for his mercy. They were sent to *pray before the Lord*, and, some think (according to the usage then), to *offer sacrifice*, with which they offered up their prayers. The Jews, in captivity, prayed towards the temple (as appears Dan. 6:10); but now that it was in a fair way to be rebuilt they sent their representatives to pray in it, remembering that God had said that his house should be called *a house of prayer for all people*, Isa. 56:7. In prayer we must set ourselves as *before the Lord*, must see his eye upon us and have our eye up to him. (2.) To enquire of God concerning his mind. Note, When we offer up our requests to God it must be with a readiness to receive instructions from him; for, if we turn away our ear from hearing his law, we cannot expect that our prayers should be acceptable to him. We must therefore desire to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of our life *that we may enquire there* (Ps. 27:4), asking, not only, Lord, what wilt thou do for me? but, Lord *what wilt thou have me to do?*

3. Whom they consulted. They spoke *to the priests that were in the house of the Lord and to the prophets*; the former were an oracle for ordinary cases, the latter for extraordinary; they were blessed with both, and would try if either could acquaint them with the mind of God in this case. Note, God having given diversities of gifts to men, and all to profit with, we should make use of all as there is occasion. They were not so wedded to the priests, their stated ministers, as to distrust the prophets, who appeared, by the gifts given them, well qualified to serve the church; nor yet were they so much enamoured with the prophets as to despise the priests, but they spoke both to the priests and to the prophets, and, in consulting both, gave glory to the God of Israel, and that one Spirit who *works all in all*. God might speak to them either by *urim* or by *prophets* (1 Sa. 28:6), and therefore they would not neglect either. The priests and the prophets were not jealous one of another, nor had any difference among themselves; let not the people then make differences between them, but thank God they had both. The prophets did indeed reprove what was amiss in the priests, but at the same time told the people that the *priest's lips should keep knowledge*, and they must *enquire the law at his mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts*, Mal. 2:7. Note, Those that would know God's mind should consult God's ministers, and in doubtful cases ask advice of those whose special business it is to *search the scriptures*.

4. What the case was which they desired satisfaction in (v. 3): *Should I weep in the fifth month, separating myself, as I have done these so many years*. Observe, (1.) What had been their past practice, not only during the seventy years of the captivity but to this time, which was twenty years after the liberty proclaimed them; they kept up solemn stated fasts for humiliation and prayer, which they religiously observed, according as their opportunities were, in their closets, families, or such assemblies for worship as they had. In the case here, they mention only one, that of the fifth month; but it appears, by ch. 8:19, that they observed four anniversary fasts, one in the fourth month (*June 17*), in remembrance of the breaking up of the wall of Jerusalem (Jer. 52:6), another in the fifth month (*July 4*), in remembrance of the burning of the temple (Jer. 52:12, 13), another in the seventh month (*September 3*), in remembrance of the killing of Gedaliah, which completed their dispersion, and another in the tenth month (*December 10*), in remembrance of the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem, 2 Ki. 25:1. Now it was very

commendable in them to keep those fasts, thus to humble themselves under those humbling providences, by which God called them to weeping and mourning, thus to accommodate themselves to their troubles, and prepare themselves for deliverance. It would likewise be a means of possessing their children betimes with a due sense of the hand of the Lord gone out against them. (2.) What was their present doubt-whether they should continue these fasts or no. The case is put as by a single person: *Should I weep?* But it was the case of many, and the satisfaction of one would be a satisfaction to the rest. Or perhaps many had left it off, but the querist will not be determined by the practice of others; if God will have him continue it, he will, whatever others do. His fasting is described by his *weeping, separating himself*. A religious fast must be solemnized, not only by abstinence, here called a separating ourselves from the ordinary lawful comforts of life, but by a godly sorrow for sin, here expressed by weeping. "Should I still keep such *days to afflict the soul as I have done these so many years?*" It is said (v. 5) to be seventy years, computed from the last captivity, as before, ch. 1:12. The enquiry intimates a readiness to continue it, if God so appoint, though it be a mortification to the flesh. [1.] Something is to be said for the continuance of these fasts. Fasting and praying are good work at any time, and do good; we have always both cause enough and need enough to humble ourselves before God. To throw off these fasts would be an evidence of their being too secure, and a cause of their being more so. They were still in distress, and under the tokens of God's displeasure; and it is unwise for the patient to break off his course of physic while he is sensible of such remains of his distemper. But, [2.] There is something to be said for the letting fall of these fasts. God had changed the method of his providences concerning them, and returned in ways of mercy to them; and ought not they then to change the method of their duties? Now that the bridegroom has returned, why should the *children of the bride-chamber fast?* Every thing is beautiful in its season. And as to the fast of the fifth month (which is that they particularly enquire about), that, being kept in remembrance of the burning of the temple, might seem to be superseded rather than any of the other, because the temple was now in a fair way to be rebuilt. But, having long kept up this fast, they would not leave it off without advice, and without asking and knowing God's mind in the case. Note, A good method of religious services, which we have found beneficial to ourselves and others, ought not to be altered without good reason, and therefore not without mature deliberation.

II. An answer given to this case. It should seem that, though the question looked plausible enough, those who proposed it were not conscientious in it, for they were more concerned about the ceremony than about the substance; they seemed to boast of their fasting, and to upbraid God Almighty with it, that he had not sooner returned in mercy to them; "for we have done it *these so many years.*" As those, Isa. 58:3, *Wherefore have we fasted, and thou seest not?* And some think that unbelief, and distrust of the promises of God, were at the bottom of their enquiry; for, if they had given them the credit that was due to them, they needed not to doubt but that their fasts ought to be laid aside, now that the occasion of them was over. And therefore the first answer to their enquiry is a very sharp reproof of their hypocrisy, directed, not only to the *people of the land*, but to *the priests*, who had set up these fasts, and perhaps some of them were for keeping them up, to serve some purpose of their own. Let them all take notice that, whereas they thought they had made God very much their debtor by these fasts, they were much mistaken, for they were not acceptable to him, unless they had been observed in a better manner and to better purpose.

1. What they did that was good was not done aright (v. 5): *You fasted and mourned.* They were not chargeable with the

omission or neglect of the duty, though it was displeasing to the body (thy fasts were *continually before me*, Ps. 50:8), but they had not managed them aright. Note, Those that come to enquire of their duty must be willing first to be told of their faults. And those that seem zealous for the outside of a duty ought to examine themselves faithfully whether they have the regard they ought to have to the inside of it. (1.) They had not an eye to God in their fasting: *Did you at all fast unto me, even to me?* He appeals to their own consciences; they will witness against them that they had not been sincere in it, much more will God, who is greater than the heart and knows all things. You know very well that *you did not at all fast to me; in fasting did you fast to me?* There was the carcase and form of the duty, but none of the life, and soul, and power of it. Was it *to me, even to me?* The repetition intimates what a great deal of stress is laid upon this as the main matter, in that and other holy exercises, that they be done to God, even to him, with an eye to his word as our rule, and his glory as our end, in them, seeking to please him and to obtain his favour, and studious by the sincerity of our intention to approve ourselves to him. When this was wanting every fast was but a jest. To fast, and not fast to God, was to mock him and provoke him, and could not be pleasing to him. Those that make fasting a cloak for sin, as Jezebel's fast, or by it make their court to men for their applause, as the Pharisees, or that rest in outward expressions of humiliation while their hearts are unhumbled, as Ahab, do they *fast to God, even to him? Is this the fast that God has chosen?* Isa. 58:5. If the solemnities of our fasting, though frequent, long, and severe, do not serve to put an edge upon devout affections, to quicken prayer, to increase godly sorrow, and to alter the temper of our minds and the course of our lives for the better, they do not at all answer the intention, and God will not accept them as performed to him, even to him. (2.) They had the same eye to themselves in their fasting that they had in their eating and drinking (v. 6): *"When you did eat, and when you did drink, on other days (nay, perhaps on your fast-days, in the observation of which you could, when you saw cause, dispense with yourselves, and take a liberty to eat and drink), did you not eat for yourselves and drink for yourselves? Have you not always done as you had a mind yourselves? Why then do you now pretend a desire to know the mind of God? In your religious feasts and thanksgivings you have had no more an eye to God than in your fasts."* Or, rather, it refers to their common meals; they did no more design the honour of God in their fasting and praying than they did in their eating and drinking; but self was still the centre in which the lines of all their actions, natural, civil, and religious, met. They needed not be in such care about the continuance of their fasts, unless they had kept them better. Note, We miss our end in eating and drinking when we eat to ourselves and drink to ourselves, whereas we should *eat and drink to the glory of God* (1 Co. 10:31), that our bodies may be fit to serve our souls in his service.

2. The principal good thing they should have done was left undone (v. 7): *"Should you not hear the words which the Lord has cried by the former prophets? Yes, that you should have done on your fast-days; it was not enough to weep and separate yourselves on your fast-days, in token of your sorrow for the judgments you were under, but you should have searched the scriptures of the prophets, that you might have seen what was the ground of God's controversy with your fathers, and might have taken warning by their miseries not to tread in the steps of their iniquities. You ask, Shall we do as we have done, in fasting? No, you must do that which you have not yet done; you must repent of your sins and reform you lives. This is what we now call you to, and it is the same that the former prophets called your fathers to."* To affect them the more with the mischief

that sin had done them, that they might be brought to repent of it, he puts them in mind of the former flourishing state of their country: Jerusalem *was then inhabited and in prosperity*, that is now desolate and in distress. The *cities round about*, that are now in ruins, were then inhabited too and *in peace*. The country likewise was very populous: *Men inhabited the south of the plain*, which was not at all fortified, and yet they lived safely, and which was fruitful, and so they lived plentifully. But then God *by the prophets cried* to them, as one in earnest, and importunate with them, to amend their ways and doings, or else their prosperity would soon be at an end. "Now," says the prophet, "you should have taken notice of that, and have inferred that what was required of them for the preventing of the judgments, and which they did not, is required of you for the removal of the judgments; and, if you do it not, all your fasting and weeping signify nothing." Note, The words of the later prophets agree with those of the former; and, whether people are in prosperity or adversity, they must be called upon to leave their sins and do their duty; this must still be the burden of every song.

Verses 8-14

What was said v. 7, that they *should have heard the words of the former prophets*, is here enlarged upon, for warning to these hypocritical enquirers, who continued their sins when they asked with great preciseness whether they should continue their fasts. This prophet had before put them in mind of their fathers' disobedience to the calls of the prophets, and what was the consequence of it (ch. 1:4-6), and now here again; for others' harms should be our warnings. God's judgments upon Israel of old for their sins were written for admonition to us Christians (1 Co. 10:11), and the same use we should make of similar providences in our own day.

I. This prophet here repeats the heads of the sermons which the former prophets preached to their fathers (v. 9, 10), because the very same things were required of them now. "Thus does the *Lord of hosts speak* to you now, and thus he did speak to your fathers, saying, *Execute true judgment.*" The duties here required of them, which would have been the lengthening of the tranquillity of their fathers and must be the restoring of their tranquillity, are not keeping fasts and offering sacrifices, but *doing justly* and *loving mercy*, duties which they were bound to by the light and law of nature, though there had been no prophets sent to insist upon them, duties which had a direct tendency to the public welfare and peace, and which they themselves would be the gainers by, and not God. 1. Magistrates must administer justice impartially, according to the maxims of the law and the merits of the cause, without respect of persons: "*Judge judgment of truth*, and execute it when you have judged it." 2. Neighbours must have a tender concern for one another, and must not only do one another no wrong, but must be ready to do one another all the good offices that lie in their power. They must *show mercy and compassion every man to his brother*, as the case called for it. The infirmities of others, as well as their calamities, are to be looked upon with compassion. *Hanc veniam petimusque damusque vicissim—This kindness we ask and exercise.* 3. They must not bear hard upon those whom they have advantage against, and who, they know, are not able to help themselves. They must not, either in commerce or in course of law, oppress *the widow, the fatherless, the stranger, and the poor*, v. 10. The weakest must not be thrust to the wall because they are weakest. No thanks to men not to deny right to those who are in a capacity to demand it and recover it; but we must, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake, give those their own who have not power to force it from us. Or

it intimates that that which is but exactness with others is exaction upon the widows and the fatherless; nay, that not relieving and helping them as we ought is, in effect, oppressing them. 4. They must not only not do wrong to any, but they must not so much as desire it nor think of it: "*Let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart. Do not project it; do not wish it; nay do not so much as please yourself with the fancy of it.*" The law of God lays a restraint upon the heart, and forbids the entertaining, forbids the admitting, of a malicious, spiteful, ill-natured thought. Deu. 15:9, *Beware that there be not a thought in thy Belial heart against thy brother.*

II. He describes the wilfulness and disobedience of their fathers, who persisted in all manner of wickedness and injustice, notwithstanding these exhortations and admonitions frequently given them in God's name; various expressions to this purport are here heaped up (v. 11, 12), setting forth the stubbornness of that carnal mind which is *enmity against God, and is not in subjection to the law of God, neither indeed can be.* They were obstinate and refractory, and persisted in their transgressions of the law purely from a spirit of contradiction to the law. 1. They would not, if they could help it, come within hearing of the prophets, but kept at a distance; or, if they could not avoid hearing what they said, yet they resolved they would not heed it: *They refused to hearken*, and looked another way as if they had not been spoken to. 2. If they did hear what was said to them, and, as it seemed, inclined at first to comply with it, yet they flew off when it came to the setting to, and, like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke, *they pulled away the shoulder*, and would not submit to the *easy yoke and the light burden* of God's commandments. *They gave a withdrawing shoulder* (so the word is); they seemed to lay their shoulder to the work, but they presently withdrew it again, as those Jer. 34:10, 11. They were like a deceitful bow, as that son that said, *I go, sir, but went not.* 3. They filled their own minds with prejudices against the word of God, and had some objection or other ready wherewith to fortify themselves against every sermon they heard. *They stopped their ears, that they should not hear*, as the deaf adder (Ps. 58:4), and none are so deaf as those that will not hear, that *make their own ear heavy*, as the word is. 4. They resolved that nothing which was said to them, for the enforcing of these injunctions, should make any impression upon them: *They made their hearts as an adamant-stone*, as a *diamond*, the hardest of stones to be wrought upon, or as a *flint*, which the mason cannot hew into shape as he can other stone out of the quarry. Nothing is so hard, so unmalleable, so inflexible, as the heart of a presumptuous sinner; and those whose hearts are hard may thank themselves; they are of their own hardening, and it is just with God to give them over to a reprobate sense, to the hardness and impenitence of their own hearts. These stubborn sinners hardened their hearts on purpose *lest they should hear* what God said to them by the written word, *by the law of Moses*, and by the *words of the prophets* that preached to them; they had *Moses and the prophets*, but resolved they would hear neither, nor would they have been persuaded though one had been sent to them from the dead. The *words of the prophet* were not regarded by them, though they were words which the Lord of hosts sent and directed to them, though he sent them immediately *by his Spirit* in the prophets; so that in despising them they affronted God himself and *resisted the Holy Ghost*. Note, The reason why men are not good is because they will not be so; they will not consider, will not comply; and therefore, *if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it.*

III. He shows the fatal consequences of it to their fathers: *Therefore came great wrath from the Lord of hosts.* God was highly

displeased with them, and justly; he required nothing of them but what was reasonable in itself and beneficial to them; and yet they refused, and in a most insolent manner too. What master could bear to be so abused by his own servant? Such an implacable enmity to the gospel as this was to the law and the prophets was that which brought *wrath to the uttermost* upon the last generation of the Jewish church, 1 Th. 2:16. Great sins against *the Lord of hosts*, whose authority is incontestable, bring *great wrath from the Lord of hosts*, whose power is irresistible. And the effect was, 1. As they had turned a deaf ear to God's word, so God turned a deaf ear to their prayers, v. 13. *As he cried* to them in their prosperity to leave their sins, *and they would not hear*, but persisted in their iniquities, so *they cried to him* in the day of their trouble to remove his judgments, and he would not hear, but lengthened out their calamities. Those that set God at defiance, in the height of their pride, when pangs came upon them cried unto him. *Lord, in trouble have they visited thee*. But God has said it, and will abide by it, *He that turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination*, Prov. 28:9; 1:24, etc. Iniquity, regarded in the heart, will certainly spoil the success of prayer, Ps. 66:18. 2. As they flew off from their duty and allegiance to God, and were of desultory and unsettled spirits, so God dissipated them and threw them about as chaff before a whirlwind: *He scattered them among all the nations whom they knew not*, and whom therefore they could not expect to receive any kindness from, v. 14. 3. As they violated all the laws of their land, so God took away all the glories of it: *Their land was desolate after them, and no man passed through or returned*. All that country that was the kingdom of the two tribes, after the dispersion of the remaining Jews, upon the slaughter of Gedaliah, was left utterly uninhabited; there was not man, woman, or child, in it, till the Jews returned at the end of seventy years' captivity; nay, it should seem, the very roads that lay through the country were deserted (none passed or repassed), which, as it had an intimation of mercy in it (though they were cast out of it, yet it was kept empty for their return), so for the present it made the judgment appear much the more dismal; for what a horrid wilderness must a land be that had been so many years uninhabited! And they might thank themselves; it was they that by their own wickedness laid *the pleasant land desolate*. It was not so much the Chaldeans that did it. No; they did it themselves. The desolations of a land are owing to the wickedness of its inhabitants, Ps. 107:34. This came of their wilful disobedience to the law of God. And the present generation saw how desolate sin had made that pleasant land, and yet would not take warning.

Chapter 8

The work of ministers is rightly to divide the word of truth and to give every one his portion. So the prophet is here instructed to do, in the further answer he gives to the case of conscience proposed about continuing the public fasts. His answer, in the foregoing chapter, is by way of reproof to those that were disobedient and would not obey the truth. But here he is ordered to change his voice, and to speak by way of encouragement to the willing and obedient. Here are two words from the Lord of hosts, and they are both good words and comfortable words. In the former of these messages (v. 1) God promises that Jerusalem shall be restored, reformed, replenished (v. 2-8), that the country shall be rich, and the affairs of the nation shall be successful, their reputation retrieved, and their state in all respects the reverse of what it had been for many years past (v. 9–15); he then exhorts them to reform what was amiss among them, that they might be ready for these favours designed them (v. 16, 17). In the latter of these messages (v. 18) he promises that their fasts should be superseded by the return of mercy (v. 19), and that thereupon they should be replenished, enriched, and strengthened, by the accession of foreigners to them (v. 20–23).

Verses 1-8

The prophet, in his foregoing discourses, had left his hearers under a high charge of guilt and a deep sense of wrath; he had left them in a melancholy view of the desolations of their pleasant land, which was the effect of their fathers' disobedience; but because he designed to bring them to repentance, not to drive them to despair, he here sets before them the great things God had in store for them, encouraging them hereby to hope that their case of conscience would shortly determine itself and that God's providence would as loudly call them to *joy and gladness* as ever it called them to *fasting and mourning*. It is here promised,

I. That God will appear for Jerusalem, and will espouse and plead her cause. 1. He will be revenged on Zion's enemies (v. 2): *I was jealous for Zion, or of Zion*; that is, "I have of late been heartily concerned for her honour and interests, *with great jealousy*. The great wrath that was against her (ch. 7:12) now turns against her adversaries. I am now *jealous for her with great fury*, and can no more bear to have her abused in her afflictions than I could bear to be abused by her provocations." This he had said before (ch. 1:14, 15), that they might promise themselves as much from the power of his anger, when it was turned for them, as they had felt from it when it was against them. The sins of Zion were her worst enemies, and had done her the most mischief; and therefore God, in his jealousy for her honour and comfort, will *take away her sins*, and then, whatever other enemies injured her, it was at their peril. 2. He will be resident in Zion's palaces (v. 3): *"I have returned to Zion, after I had seemed so long to stand at a distance, and I will again dwell in the midst of Jerusalem as formerly."* This secures to them the tokens of his presence in his ordinances and the instances of his favour in his providences.

II. That there shall be a wonderful reformation in Jerusalem, and religion, in the power of it, shall prevail and flourish there. *"Jerusalem, that has dealt treacherously both with God and man, shall become so famous for fidelity and honesty that it shall be called and known by the name of a city of truth, and the inhabitants of it shall be called children that will not lie.* The *faithful city* has become a *harlot* (Isa. 1:21), but shall now become a *faithful city* again, faithful to the *God of Israel* and to the

worship of him only." This was fulfilled; for the Jews after the captivity, though there was much amiss among them, were never guilty of idolatry. Jerusalem shall be called *the mountain of the Lord of hosts*, owning him and owned by him, and therefore *the holy mountain*, cleared from idols and consecrated to God, and not, as it had been, the *mount of corruption*, 2 Ki. 23:13. Note, The city of God ought to be *a city of truth* and the *mountain of the Lord of hosts a holy mountain*. Those that profess religion, and relation to God, must study to adorn their profession by all instances of godliness and honesty.

III. That there shall be in Jerusalem a great increase of people, and all the marks and tokens of a profound tranquillity, When it has become a *city of truth* and a *mountain of holiness*, it is then peaceable and prosperous, and every thing in it looks bright and pleasant. 1. You may look with pleasure upon the generation that is going off the stage, and see them fairly quitting it in the ordinary course of nature, and not driven off from it by war, famine, or pestilence (v. 4): *In the streets of Jerusalem*, that had been filled with the bodies of the slain, or deserted and left desolate, shall now dwell *old men and old women*, who have not been cut off by untimely deaths (either through their own intemperance or God's vengeance), but have the even thread of their days spun out to a full length; they shall feel no distemper but the decay of nature, and go to their grave in a full age, as a *shock of corn in his season*. They shall have *every one his staff in his hand, for very age*, to support him, as Jacob, who *worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff*, Heb. 11:21. Old age needs a support, and should not be ashamed to use it, but should furnish itself with divine graces, which will be the strength of the heart and a better support than a staff in the hand. Note, The hoary head, as it is a crown of glory to those that wear it, so it is to the places where they live. It is a graceful thing to a city to see abundance of old people in it; it is a sign, not only of the healthfulness of the air, but of the prevalence of virtue and the suppression and banishment of those many vices which cut off the number of men's months in the midst; it is a sign, not only that the climate is temperate, but that the people are so. 2. You may look with as much pleasure upon the generation that is rising up in their room (v. 5): *The streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets*. This intimates, (1.) That they shall be blessed with a multitude of children; their families shall increase and multiply, and replenish the city, which was an early product of the divine blessing, Gen. 1:28. Happy the man, happy the nation, whose quiver is full of these arrows! They shall have of both sexes, *boys and girls*, in whom their families shall afterwards be joined, and another generation raised up. (2.) That their children shall be healthful, and strong, and active; their boys and girls shall not lie sick in bed, or sit pining in the corner, but (which is a pleasant sight to parents) shall be hearty and cheerful, and play in the streets. It is their pleasant playing age; let us not grudge it to them; much good may it do them and no harm. *Evil days* will come time enough, and *years* of which they will *say* that they have *no pleasure in them*, in consideration of which they are concerned not to spend all their time in play, but to remember their Creator. (3.) That they shall have great plenty, meat enough for all their mouths. In time of famine we find the children *swooning as the wounded, in the streets of the city*, Lam. 2:11, 12. If they are playing in the streets, it is a good sign that they want for nothing. (4.) That they shall not be terrified with the alarms of war, but enjoy a perfect security. There shall be *no breaking in of invaders, no going out of deserters, no complaining in the streets* (Ps. 144:14); for, when there is playing in the streets, it is a sign that there is little care or fear there. Time was when the enemy hunted their steps so closely that they could not go in their streets (Lam. 4:18), but now they shall *play in the streets* and fear

no evil. (5.) That they shall have love and peace among themselves. The boys and girls shall not be fighting in the streets, as sometimes in cities that are divided into factions and parties the children soon imbibe and express the mutual resentments of the parents; but they shall be innocently and lovingly *playing in the streets*, not devouring, but diverting, one another. (6.) That the sports and diversions used shall be all harmless and inoffensive; the boys and girls shall have no other play than what they are willing that persons should see *in the streets*, no play that seeks corners, no playing the fool, or playing the wanton, for it is the mountain of the Lord, the *holy mountain*, but honest and modest recreations, which they have no reason to be ashamed of. (7.) That childish youthful sports shall be confined to the age of childhood and youth. It is pleasing to see the *boys and girls playing in the streets*, but it is ill-favoured to see men and women playing there, who should fill up their time with work and business. It is well enough for *children* to be *sitting in the market-place*, crossing questions (Mt. 11:16, 17), but it is no way fit that men, who are able to *work in the vineyard*, should *stand all the day idle* there, Mt. 20:3.

IV. That the scattered Israelites shall be brought together again from all parts whither they were dispersed (v. 7): "*I will save my people from the east country, and from the west; I will save them from being lost, or losing themselves, in Babylon, or in Egypt, or in any other country whither they were driven.*" They shall neither be detained by the nations among whom they sojourn nor shall they incorporate with them; but I will *save them*, will separate them, and will bring them to their own land again; by the prosperity of their land I will invite them back, and at the same time incline them to return; and *they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem*, shall choose to dwell there, because it is the holy city, though, upon many other accounts, it was more eligible to dwell in the country; and therefore we find (Neh. 11:2) that *the people blessed all the men who willingly offered themselves to dwell at Jerusalem.*

V. That God would renew his covenant with them, would be faithful to them and make them so to him: *They shall be my people and I will be their God.* That is the foundation and crown of all these promises, and is inclusive of all happiness. They shall obey God's laws, and God will secure and advance all their interests. This contract shall be made, shall be new-made, *in truth and in righteousness.* Some think that the former denotes God's part of the covenant (he will be *their God in truth*, he will make good all his promises of favour to them) and the latter man's part of the covenant—they shall be his people in *righteousness*, they shall be a righteous people and shall abound in the *fruits of righteousness*, and shall not, as they have done, deal treacherously and unjustly with their God. See Hos. 2:19, 20. God will never leave nor forsake them in a way of mercy, as he has promised them; and they shall never leave nor forsake him in a way of duty, as they have promised him. These promises were fulfilled in the flourishing state of the Jewish church, for some ages, between the captivity and Christ's time; they were to have a further and a fuller accomplishment in the gospel-church, that *heavenly Jerusalem*, which is from above, is free, and is the *mother of us all*; but the fullest accomplishment of all will be in the future state.

All these precious promises are here ratified, and the doubts of God's people silenced, with that question (v. 6): "*If it be marvellous in the eyes of this people, should it be marvellous in my eyes?* If it seem unlikely to you that ever Jerusalem should be thus repaired, should be thus replenished, is it therefore impossible with God?" The *remnant of this people* (and God's people in this world are but a remnant), being few and feeble, thought all this was too good news to be true, especially *in these*

days, these difficult days, these cloudy and dark days. Considering how bad the times are, it is highly improbable, it is morally impossible, they should ever come to be so good as the prophet speaks. How can these things be? How can dry bones live? But should it therefore appear so in the eyes of God? Note, We do both God and ourselves a deal of wrong if we think that, when we are *nonplussed*, he is so, and that he cannot get over the difficulties which to us seem insuperable. *With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible*; so far are God's thoughts and ways above ours.

Verses 9-17

God, by the prophet, here gives further assurances of the mercy he had in store for Judah and Jerusalem. Here is line upon line for their comfort, as before there was for their conviction. These verses contain strong encouragements with reference to the difficulties they now laboured under. And we may observe,

I. Who they were to whom these encouragements did belong—to those who, in obedience to the call of God by his prophets, applied in good earnest to the building of the temple (v. 9): "*Let your hands be strong*, that are busy at work for God, *you that hear in these days these words by the mouth of the prophets*, and are not disobedient to them *as your fathers were*, in the former days, to the words of those prophets that were sent to them. You may take the comfort of the promises, and shall have the benefit of them, who have obeyed the precepts given you *in the day that the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid*, when you were told that, having begun with it, you must go on, *that the temple might be built*; God told you that you must go on with it, and you have laboured hard at it for some time, in obedience to the heavenly vision. Now you are those whose hands must be strengthened and whose hearts must be comforted, with these precious promises; to you is the word of this consolation sent." Note, Those, and those only, that are employed for God, may expect to be encouraged by him; those who lay their hands to the plough of duty shall have them strengthened with the promises of mercy; and those who avoid their fathers' faults, not only cut off the entail of the curse, but have it turned into a blessing.

II. What the discouragements were which they had hitherto laboured under, v. 10. These are mentioned as a foil to the blessings God was now about to bestow upon them, to make them appear the more strange, to the glory of God, and the more sweet, to their comfort. The truth was the times had long been very bad, and the calamities and difficulties of them were many and great. 1. Trade was dead; there was nothing to be done and therefore nothing to be got. *Before these days* of reformation began *there was no hire for man, nor any hire for beasts*. The fruits of the earth (though it had long lain fallow, and therefore, one would think, should have been the more fertile) were thin and poor, so that the husbandman had no occasion to hire harvest people to reap his corn, nor teams to carry it home, for he could be scarcely said to have any. Merchants had no goods to import or export, so that they needed not to hire either men or beasts; hence the poor people, who lived by their labour, had no way of getting bread for themselves and their families. 2. Travelling was dangerous, so that all commerce both by sea and land was cut off; nay, none durst stir abroad so much as to visit their friends, for *their was no peace to him that went out, or came in, because of the affliction*. The Samaritans, and Ammonites, and their other evil neighbours, made inroads upon them in small parties, and seized all they could lay their hands on; the roads were infested with highwaymen, and both city and country with housebreakers; so that neither men's persons nor their goods were safe at home or abroad. 3. There was no such thing as

friendship or good neighbourship among them: *I set all men every one against his neighbour*. In this there was a great deal of sin, for these wars and fightings came from men's lust, and this God was not the author of; but there was in it a great deal of misery also, and so God was in it a just avenger of their disobedience to him; because they were of an *evil spirit* towards him, a spirit of contradiction to his laws, God sent among them an evil spirit, to make them vexatious one to another. Those that throw off the love of God forfeit the comfort of brotherly love.

III. What encouragement they shall now have to proceed in the good work they are about, and to hope that it shall yet be well with them: "Thus and thus you have been harassed and afflicted, but now God will change his way towards you, v. 11. Now that you return to your duty God will comfort you according to the time that he has afflicted you; the ebbing tide shall flow again." 1. God will not proceed in his controversy with them; *I will not be to them as in the former days*. Note, It is with us well or ill according as God is to us; for every creature is that to us which he makes it to be. And, if we walk not contrary to God as in the former days, he will not walk contrary to us as in the former days; for it is only *with the froward* that he will *wrestle*. 2. They shall have great plenty and abundance of all good things (v. 12): *The seed sown shall be prosperous*, and yield a great increase; *the vine shall give her fruit*, which makes glad the heart, and *the ground* its products, which strengthen the heart; they shall have all they can desire, not only for necessity, but for ornament and delight. The *heavens shall give their dew*, without which the earth would not yield her increase, which is a constant intimation to us of the beneficence of the God of heaven to men on earth and of their dependence on him. It is said of a *sweeping rain* that it *leaves no food* (Prov. 28:3); but here the *gentle dew* waters the earth, that it may give *seed to the sower and bread to the eater*. And thus God will *cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things*. They are but a *remnant*, a *residue*, very few, one would think scarcely worth looking after; but, now that they are at work for God, he will take care that they shall want nothing which is fit for them. This confirms what the prophet's colleague had said, a little before (Hag. 2:16, 19), *From this day will I bless you*. Note, God's people, that serve him faithfully, have great possessions. "*All is yours, for you are Christ's.*" 3. They shall recover their credit among their neighbours (v. 13): *You were a curse among the heathen*. Every one censured and condemned them, spoke ill of them, and wished ill to them, upon the account of the great disgrace that they were under; some think that they were made a form of execration, so that if a man would load his enemy with the heaviest curse he would say, *God make thee like a Jew!* "But now, *I will save you, and you shall be a blessing*. Your restoration shall be as much taken notice of to your honour as ever your desolation and dispersion were to your reproach; you shall be applauded and admired as much as ever you were vilified and run down, shall be courted and caressed as much as ever you were slighted and abandoned." Most men smile or frown upon their neighbours according as Providence smiles or frowns upon them; but those whom God plainly blesses as his own, shows favour to and puts honour upon, we ought also to respect and be kind to. The blessed of the Lord are the blessing of the land, and should be so accounted by us. This is here promised to the house both of Israel and Judah; for many of the ten tribes returned out of captivity with the two tribes, and shared with them in those blessings; and, it is probable, besides what came at first, many, very many, flocked to them afterwards, when they saw their affairs take this turn. 4. God himself will determine to do them good, v. 14, 15. All their comforts take rise from the thoughts of the love that God had towards them, Jer. 29:11.

Compare these promises with the former threatenings. (1.) When they *provoked him* to anger with *their sins*, he said that he would *punish them*, and so he did; it was his declared purpose to bring destroying judgments upon them, and, because they repented not of their rebellions against him, he repented not of his threatenings against them, but let the sentence of the law take its course. Note, God's punishing sinners is never a sudden and hasty resolve, but is always the product of thought, and there is a counsel in that part of the will of God. If the sinner turn not, God will not turn. (2.) Now that they pleased him with their services; he said that he would *do them good*; and will he not be as true to his promises as he was to his threatenings? No doubt he will: "*So again have I thought to do well to Jerusalem in those days*, when you begin to hearken to the voice of God speaking to you by his prophets; and these thoughts also shall be performed."

IV. The use they are to make of these encouragements.

1. Let them take the comfort which these promises give to them: *Fear you not* (v. 15); *let your hands be strong* (v. 9); and both together (v. 13), *Fear not, but let your hands be strong*. (1.) The difficulties they met with in their work must not drive them from it, nor make them go on heavily in it, for the issue would be good and the reward great. Let this therefore animate them to proceed with vigour and cheerfulness. (2.) The dangers they were exposed to from their enemies must not terrify them; those that have God for them, engaged to do them good, need not fear *what man can do against them*.

2. Let them do the duty which those promises call for from them, v. 16, 17. The very same duties which the former prophets pressed upon their fathers from the consideration of the wrath threatened (ch. 7:9, 10) this prophet presses upon them from the consideration of the mercy promised: "Leave it to God, to perform for you what he has promised, in his own way and time, but upon condition that you make conscience of your duty. *These are the things then that you shall do*; this is your part of the covenant; these are the articles which you are to perform, fulfil, and keep, that you may not put a bar in your own door and stop the current of God's favours." (1.) "You must never tell a lie, but always speak as you think, and as the matter is, to the best of your knowledge: *Speak you every man the truth to his neighbour*, both in bargains and in common converse; dread every word that looks like a lie." This precept the apostle quotes (Eph. 4:25), and backs it with this reason, *We are members one of another*. (2.) Those that are entrusted with the administration of public justice must see to it, not only that none be wronged by it, but that those who are wronged be righted by it: *Execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates*. Let the judges that sit in the gates in all their judicial proceedings have regard both to truth and to peace; let them take care to do justice, to accommodate differences, and to prevent vexatious suits. it must be a judgment of truth in order to peace, and making those friends that were at variance, and a judgment of peace as far as is consistent with truth, and no further. (3.) No man must bear malice against his neighbour upon any account; this is the same with what we had ch. 7:10. We must not only keep our hands from doing evil, but we must watch over our hearts, that they *imagine not any evil* against our neighbour, Prov. 3:29. Injury and mischief must be crushed in the thought, in the embryo. (4.) Great reverence must be had for an oath, and conscience made of it: "Never take a false oath, nay, *love no false oath*; that is, hate it, dread it, keep at a distance from it. Love not to impose oaths upon others, lest they swear falsely; love not that any should take a false oath for your benefit, and forswear themselves to do you a kindness." A very good reason is annexed against all these corrupt and wicked practices: "For

all these are things that I hate, and therefore you must hate them if you expect to have God your friend." These things here forbidden are all of them found among the *seven things which the Lord hates*, Prov. 6:16–19. Note, We must forbear sin, not only because God is angry at it, and therefore it is dangerous to us, but because he hates it, and therefore it ill becomes us and is a very ungrateful thing.

Verses 18-23

These verses contain two precious promises, for the further encouragement of those pious Jews that were hearty in building the temple.

I. That a happy period should be put to their fasts, and there should be no more occasion for them, but they should be converted into thanksgiving days, v. 19. This is a direct answer to the enquiry concerning their fasts, ch. 7:3. Those of them that fasted in hypocrisy had their doom in the foregoing chapter, but those that in sincerity humbled themselves before God, and sought his face, have here a comfortable assurance given them of a large share in the happy times approaching. The four *yearly fasts* which they had religiously observed should be *to the house of Judah joy and gladness, and solemn feasts*, and those cheerful ones. Note, Joyous times will come to the church after troublous times; if weeping endure for more than a night, and joy come not next morning, yet the morning will come that will introduce it at length. And, when God comes towards us in ways of mercy, we must meet him with joy and thankfulness; when God turns judgments into mercies we must turn fasts into festivals, and thus *walk after the Lord*. And those who *sow in tears* with Zion shall *reap in joy* with her; those who submit to the restraints of her solemn fasts while they continue shall share in the triumphs of her cheerful feasts when they come, Isa. 66:10. The inference from this promise is, "*Therefore love the truth and peace*; be faithful and honest in all your dealings, and let it be a pleasure to you to be so, though thereby you cut yourselves short of those gains which you see others get dishonestly; and, as much as in you lies, live peaceably with all men, and be in your element when you are in charity. Let the truths of God rule in your heads, and let the peace of God rule in your hearts."

II. That a great accession should be made to the church by the conversion of many foreigners, v. 20–23. This was fulfilled but in part when, in the latter times of the Jewish church, there were abundance of proselytes from all the countries about, and some that lay very remote, who came yearly to worship at Jerusalem, which added very much both to the grandeur and wealth of that city, and contributed greatly to the making of it so considerable as it came to be before our Saviour's time, though now it was but just peeping out of its ruins. But it would be accomplished much more fully in the conversion of the Gentiles to the faith of Christ, and the incorporating of them with the believing Jews in one great body, under Christ the head, a *mystery* which is *made manifest* by the *scriptures of the prophets* (Rom. 16:26), and by this among the rest, which makes it strange that when it was accomplished it was so great a surprise and stumbling-block to the Jews. Observe,

1. Who they are that shall be added to the church—*people, and the inhabitants of many cities* (v. 20); not only a few ignorant country people that may be easily imposed upon, or some idle people that have nothing else to do, but intelligent inquisitive citizens, men of business and acquaintance with the world, shall embrace the gospel of Christ; *yea, many people and strong nations* (v. 22), some of *all languages*, v. 23. By this it appears that they are brought into the church, not by human persuasion,

for they are of different languages, not by external force, for they are strong nations, able to have kept their ground if they had been so attacked, but purely by the effectual working of divine truth and grace. Note, God has his remnant in all parts; and in the general assembly of the church of the first-born some will be found *out of all nations and kindreds*, Rev. 7:9.

2. How their accession to the church is described: They shall come *to pray before the Lord and to seek the Lord of hosts* (v. 21); and, to show that this is the main matter in which their conversion consists, it is repeated (v. 22): *They shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord*. No mention is made of their offering sacrifices, not only because these were not expected from the proselytes of the gate, but because, when the Gentiles should be brought in, sacrifice and offering should be quite abolished. See who are to be accounted converts to God and members of the church: and all that are converts to God are members of the church. (1.) They are such as *seek the Lord of hosts*, such as enquire for *God their Maker*, covet and court his favour, and are truly desirous to know his mind and will and sincerely devoted to his honour and glory. *This is the generation of those that seek him*. (2.) They are such as *pray before the Lord*,—such as make conscience, and make a business, of the duty of prayer,—such as dare not, would not, for all the world, live without it,—such as by prayer pay their homage to God, own their dependence upon him, maintain their communion with him, and fetch in mercy and grace from him. (3.) They are such as herein have an eye to the divine revelation and institution, which is signified by their doing this *in Jerusalem*, the place which God had chosen, where his word was, where his temple was, which was a type of Christ and his mediation, which all faithful worshippers will have a believing regard to.

3. How unanimous they shall be in their accession to the church, and how zealous in exciting one another to it (v. 21): *The inhabitants of one city shall go to another*, as formerly when they went up from all parts of the country to worship at the yearly feasts; and they shall say, *Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord; I will go also*. This intimates, (1.) That those who are brought into an acquaintance with Christ themselves should do all they can to bring others acquainted with him; thus Andrew invited Peter to Christ and Philip invited Nathanael. True grace hates monopolies. (2.) That those who are duly sensible of their need of Christ, and of the favour of God through him, will stir up themselves and others without delay to hasten to him: "*Let us go speedily to pray*; it is for our lives, and the lives of our souls, that we are to petition, and therefore it concerns us to lose no time; in a matter of such moment delays are dangerous." (3.) That our communion with God is very much assisted and furthered by the communion of saints. It is pleasant to go *to the house of God in company* (Ps. 55:14), *with the multitude* (Ps. 42:4), and it is of good use to those that do so to excite one another to go speedily and lose no time; we should be glad when it is said to us, *Let us go*, Ps. 122:1. As iron sharpens iron, so may good men sharpen the countenances and spirits one of another in that which is good. (4.) That those who stir up others to that which is good must take heed that they do not turn off, or tire, or draw back themselves; he that says, *Let us go*, says, *I will go also*. What good we put others upon doing we must see to it that we do ourselves, else we shall be judged out of our own mouths. Not, "Do you go, and I will stay at home;" but, "Do you go, and I will go with you." "A singular pattern (says Mr. Pemble) of zealous charity, that neither leaves others behind nor turns others before it."

4. Upon what inducement they shall join themselves to the church, not for the church's sake, but for his sake who dwells in it

(v. 23): *Ten men* of different nations and languages *shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew*, begging of him not to outgo them, but to take them along with him. This intimates the great honour they have for a Jew, as one of the chosen people of God, and therefore well worthy their acquaintance; they cannot all come to take him by the hand, or embrace him in their arms, but are ambitious to take hold of the skirt of his robe, to touch the hem of his garment, saying, *We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you*. The gospel was preached to the Jews first (for of that nation the apostles were) and by them it was carried to the Gentiles. St. Paul was a Jew whose skirt many took hold of when they welcomed him as *an angel of God*, and begged him to take them along with him to Christ; thus the Greeks took hold of Philip's skirt, saying, *Sir, we would see Jesus*, Jn. 12:21. Note, It is the privilege of the saints that they have God with them, have him among them—the knowledge, and fear, and worship of him; they have his favour and gracious presence, and this should invite us into communion with them. It is good being with those who have God with them, and those who *join themselves to the Lord* must *join themselves to his disciples*; if we take God for our God, we must take his people for our people, cast in our lot among them, and be willing to take our lot with them.

Chapter 9

At this chapter begins another sermon, which is continued to the end of ch. 11. It is called, "The burden of the word of the Lord," for every word of God has weight in it to those who regard it, and will be a heavy weight upon those who do not, a dead weight. Here is, I. A prophecy against the Jews' unrighteous neighbours—the Syrians, Tyrians, Philistines, and others (v. 1-6), with an intimation of mercy to some of them, in their conversion (v. 7), and a promise of mercy to God's people, in their protection (v. 8). II. A prophecy of their righteous King, the Messiah, and his coming, with a description of him (v. 9) and of his kingdom, the nature and extent of it (v. 10). III. An account of the obligation the Jews lay under to Christ for their deliverance out of their captivity in Babylon (v. 11, 12). IV. A prophecy of the victories and successes God would grant to the Jews over their enemies, as typical of our great deliverance by Christ (v. 13–15). V. A promise of great plenty, and joy, and honour, which God had in reserve for his people (v. 16, 17), which was written for their encouragement.

Verses 1-8

After the precious promises we had in the foregoing chapter of favour to God's people, their persecutors, who hated them, come to be reckoned with, those particularly that bordered close upon them.

I. The Syrians had been bad neighbours to Israel, and God had a controversy with them. The word of the Lord shall be a *burden in the land of Hadrach*, that is, of *Syria*, but it does not appear why it was so called. That that kingdom is meant is plain, because Damascus, the metropolis of that kingdom, is said to be the *rest* of this burden; that is, the judgments here threatened shall light and lie upon that city. Those are miserable upon whom the burden of the word of the Lord rests, upon whom *the wrath of God abides* (Jn. 3:36); for it is a weight that they can neither shake off nor bear up under. There are those whom God *causes his fury to rest* upon. Those whom the wrath of God makes its mark it will be sure to hit; those whom it makes its rest it will be sure to sink. And the reason of this burden's resting on Damascus is because *the eyes of man, as of all the tribes of Israel* (or rather, *even of all the tribes of Israel*), are *towards the Lord*, because the people of God by faith and prayer look up to him for succour and relief and depend upon him to take their part against their enemies. Note, It is a sign that God is about to appear remarkably for his people when he raises their believing expectations from him and dependence upon him, and when by his grace he turns them from idols to himself. Is. 17:7, 8, *At that day shall a man look to his Maker*. It may be read thus, *for the Lord has an eye upon man, and upon all the tribes of Israel*; he is King of nations as well as King of saints; he governs the world as well as the church, and therefore will punish the sins of other people as well as those of his own people. God is *Judge of all*, and therefore all must give account of themselves to him. When St. Paul was converted at Damascus, and preached there, and disputed with the Jews, then the word of the Lord might be said to rest there, and then *the eyes of men*, of other men besides *the tribes of Israel*, began to be *towards the Lord*; see Acts 9:22. Hamath, a country which lay north of Damascus, and which we often read of, *shall border thereby* (v. 2); it joins to Syria, and shall share in the *burden of the word of the Lord* that rests upon Damascus. The Jews have a proverb, *Woe to the wicked man, and woe to his neighbour*, who is in danger of partaking in his sins and in his plagues. *Woe to the land of Hadrach*, and woe to *Hamath that borders*

thereby.

II. Tyre and Zidon come next to be called to an account here, as in other prophecies, v. 2-4. Observe here,

1. Tyrus flourishing, thinking herself very safe, and ready to set God's judgments, not only at a distance, but at defiance: for, (1.) She is *very wise*. It is spoken ironically; she thinks herself very wise, and able to outwit even the wisdom of God. It is granted that her king is a great politician, and that her statesmen are so, Eze. 28:3. But with all their wit and policy they shall not be able to evade the judgments of God when they come with commission; there is no *wisdom* nor *counsel against the Lord*; nay, it is his honour to take the wise in their own craftiness. (2.) She is very strong, and well fortified both by nature and art: *Tyrus did build herself a strong-hold*, which she thought could never be brought down nor got over. (3.) She is very rich; and *money is a defence*; it is the sinews of war, Eccl. 7:12. By her vast trade she has *heaped up silver as the dust, and fine gold as the mire of the streets*, that is, she has an abundance of them, heaps of silver as common as heaps of sand, Job 27:16. Solomon made silver to be in Jerusalem as the *stones of the streets*; but Tyre went further, and made *fine gold* to be as *the mire of the streets*. It were well if we could all learn so to look upon it, in comparison with the merchandise of wisdom and grace and the gains thereof.

2. Tyrus falling, after all. Her wisdom, and wealth, and strength, shall not be able to secure her (v. 4): *The Lord will cast her out* of that strong-hold wherein she has fortified herself, will *make her poor* (so some read it); there have been instances of those that have fallen from the height of plenty to the depth of poverty, and great riches have come to nothing. God will *smite her power in the sea*; her being surrounded by the water shall not secure her, but *she shall be devoured with fire*, and burnt down to the ground. Tyrus, being seated in the midst of the water, was, one would have thought, in danger of being some time or other overflowed or washed away by that; yet God chooses to destroy it by the contrary element. Sometimes he brings ruin upon his enemies by those means which they least suspect. Water enough was nigh at hand to quench the flames of Tyre, and yet by them she shall be devoured; for who can put out the fire which the breath of the Almighty blows up?

III. God next contends with the Philistines, with their great cities and great lords, that bordered southward upon Israel.

1. They shall be alarmed and affrighted by the word of the Lord lighting and resting upon Damascus (v. 5); the disgraces of Israel had many a time been *published in the streets of Ashkelon*, and they had triumphed in them; but now *Ashkelon shall see* the ruin of her friends and allies, and shall *fear*; *Gaza also shall see it, and be very sorrowful, and Ekron*, concluding that their own turns come next, now that the cup of trembling goes round. What will become of their house when their neighbour's is on fire? They had looked upon Tyre and Zidon as a barrier to their country; but, when those strong cities were ruined, their *expectations* from them *were ashamed*, as our expectation from all creatures will be in the issue.

2. They shall themselves be ruined and wasted. (1.) The government shall be dissolved: *The king shall perish from Gaza*, not only the present king shall be cut off, but there shall be no succession, no successor, (2.) The cities shall be dispeopled: *Ashkelon shall not be inhabited*; the rightful owners shall be expelled, either slain or carried into captivity. (3.) Foreigners shall take possession of their land and become masters of all its wealth (v. 6): *A bastard shall dwell in Ashdod*; a spurious brood of strangers shall enter upon the inheritances of the natives, which they have no more right to than a bastard has to the estates of

the legitimate children. And thus God will *cut off the pride of the Philistines*, all the strength and wealth which they prided themselves in, and which were the ground of their confidence in themselves and their contempt of the Israel of God. This prophecy of the destruction of the Philistines, and of Damascus, and Tyre, was accomplished, not long after this, by Alexander the Great, who ravaged all these countries with his victorious army, took the cities, and planted colonies in them, which Quintus Curtius gives a particular account of in the history of his conquests. And some think he is meant by the bastard that shall dwell in Ashdod, for his mother Olympia owned him begotten in adultery, but pretended it was by Jupiter. The Jews afterwards got ground of the Philistines, Syrians, and others of their neighbours, took some of their cities from them and possessed their countries, as appears by the histories of Josephus and the Maccabees, and this was foretold before, Zep. 2:4, etc.; Obad. 20.

3. Some among them shall be converted, and brought home to God, by his gospel and grace; so some understand v. 7, as a promise, (1.) That God would take away the sins of these nations—*their blood* and *their abominations*, their cruelties and their idolatries. God will part between them and these sins which they have rolled under their tongue as a sweet morsel, and are as loth to part with as men are to part with the meat out of their mouths, and which they hold fast between their teeth. Nothing is too hard for the grace of God to do. (2.) That he would accept of a remnant of them for his own: *He that remains shall be for our God*. God would preserve a remnant even of these nations, that should be the monuments of his mercy and grace and be set apart for him; and the disadvantages of their birth shall be no bar to their acceptance with God, but a Philistine shall be as acceptable to God, upon gospel-terms, as one of Judah, nay, as a governor, or chief one, in Judah, and a man of Ekron shall be as a Jebusite, or a man of Jerusalem, as a proselyted Jebusite, as Araunah the Jebusite, 2 Sa. 24:16. In Christ Jesus there is no distinction of nations, but all are one in him, all alike welcome to him.

IV. In all this God intends mercy for Israel, and it is in kindness to them that God will deal thus with the neighbouring nations, to avenge their quarrel for what is past and to secure them for the future.

1. Thus some understand the seventh verse, as intimating, (1.) That thus God would deliver his people from their bloody adversaries, who hated them, and to whom they were an abomination, when they were just ready to devour them and make a prey of them: I will *take away his blood* (that is, the blood of Israel) out of the mouth of the Philistines and *from between their teeth* (Amos 3:12), when, in their hatred of them and enmity to them, they were greedily devouring them. (2.) That he would thus give them victory and dominion over them: And *he that remains* (that is, the remnant of Israel) *shall be for our God*, shall be taken into his favour, shall own him and be owned by him, and *he shall be as a governor in Judah*; though the Jews have been long in servitude, they shall recover their ancient dignity, and be victorious, as David and other governors in Judah formerly were; and Ekron (that is, the Philistines) shall be as the Jebusites, and the rest of the devoted nations, who were brought into subjection under them.

2. However, this is plainly the sense of v. 8, that God will take his people under his special protection, and *therefore* will weaken their neighbours, that it may not be in their power to do them a mischief: *I will encamp about my house because of the army*. Note, God's house lies in the midst of an enemy's country, and his church is as a lily among thorns; and therefore God's

power and goodness are to be observed in the special preservation of it. The *camp of the saints*, being a little flock in comparison with the numerous armies of the powers of darkness that are set against it round about, would certainly be swallowed up if the angels of God did not encamp about it, as they did about Elisha, to deliver it, Rev. 20:9; Ps. 34:7. When the times are unusually perilous, when armies are marching and counter-marching, and all bearing ill-will to Zion, then Providence will as it were double its guards upon the church of God, *because of him that passes by and because of him that returns*, that whether he return a conqueror or conquered he may do it no harm. And, as none that pass by shall hurt them, so *no oppressor shall pass through them any more*; they shall have no enemy within themselves to rule them with rigour, and *to make their lives bitter to them with sore bondage*, as of old in Egypt. This was fulfilled when, for some time after the struggles of the Maccabees, Judea was a free and flourishing state, or perhaps when Alexander the Great, struck with an awe of Jaddus the high priest, favoured the Jews, and took them under his protection, at the same time when he wasted the neighbouring countries. And the reason given for all this is, *"For now have I seen with my eyes, now have I carefully distinguished between my people and other people, with whom before they seemed to have their lot in common, and have made it to appear that I know those that are mine,"* This agrees with Ps. 34:15, *The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous*; now his eyes, which *run to and fro through the earth*, shall fix upon them, that he may show himself tender of them, and *strong on their behalf*, 2 Chr. 16:9.

Verses 9-11

That here begins a prophecy of the Messiah and his kingdom is plain from the literal accomplishment of the ninth verse in, and its express application to, Christ's riding in triumph into *Jerusalem*, Mt. 21:5; Jn. 12:15.

I. Here is notice given of the approach of the Messiah promised, as matter of great joy to the Old-Testament church: *Behold, thy king cometh unto thee*. Christ is a king, invested with regal powers and prerogatives, a sovereign prince, an absolute monarch, having all power both in heaven and on earth. He is Zion's king. God has *set him upon his holy hill of Zion*, Ps. 2:6. In Zion his glory as a king shines; thence *his law went forth, even the word of the Lord*. In the gospel-church his spiritual kingdom is administered; it is by him that the ordinances of the church are instituted, and its officers commissioned; and it is taken under his protection; he fights the church's battles and secures its interests, as its king. "This King has been long in coming, but now, *behold, he cometh*; he is at the door. There are but a few ages more to run out, and he that shall come will come. He *cometh unto thee*; the Word will shortly be made flesh, and dwell within thy borders; he will *come to his own*. And therefore *rejoice, rejoice greatly, and shout for joy*; look upon it as *good news*, and be assured it is true; please thyself to think that he is coming, that he is on his way towards thee; and be ready to go forth to meet him with acclamations of joy, as one not able to conceal it, it is so great, nor ashamed to own it, it is so just; cry *Hosanna* to him." Christ's approaches ought to be the church's applauses.

II. Here is such a description of him as renders him very amiable in the eyes of all his loving subjects, and his coming to them very acceptable. 1. He is a righteous ruler; all his acts of government will be exactly according to the rules of equity, for *he is just*. 2. He is a powerful protector to all those that bear faith and true allegiance to him, for he *has salvation*; he has it in his

power; he has it to bestow upon all his subjects. He is the *God of salvation*; treasures of salvation are in him. He is *servatus*—*saving himself* (so some read it), rising out of the grave by his own power and so qualifying himself to be our Saviour. (3.) He is a *meek, humble, tender Father* to all his subjects as his children; he is *lowly*; he is *poor* and *afflicted* (so the word signifies), so it denotes the meanness of his condition; having *emptied himself*, he was *despised and rejected of men*. But the evangelist translates it so as to express the temper of his spirit: he is *meek*, not taking state upon him, nor resenting injuries, but *humbling himself* from first to last, condescending to the mean, compassionate to the miserable; this was a bright and excellent character of him as a prophet (Mt. 11:29, *Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart*), and no less so *as a king*. It was a proof of this that, when he made his public entry into his own city (and it was the only passage of his life that had any thing in it magnificent in the eye of the world), he chose to ride, not upon a stately horse, or in a chariot, as great men used to ride, but *upon an ass*, a beast of service indeed, but a poor silly and contemptible one, low and slow, and in those days ridden only by the meaner sort of people; nor was it an ass fitted for use, but an *ass's colt*, a little foolish unmanageable thing, that would be more likely to disgrace his rider than be any credit to him; and that not his own neither, nor helped off, as sometimes a sorry horse is, by good furniture, for he had no saddle, no housings, no trappings, no equipage, but his disciples' clothes thrown upon the colt; for he *made himself of no reputation* when he visited us in great humility.

III. His kingdom is here set forth in the glory of it. This king has, and will have, a kingdom, not of this world, but a spiritual kingdom, a *kingdom of heaven*. 1. It shall not be set up and advanced by external force, by an arm of flesh or carnal weapons of warfare. No; he *will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the horses from Jerusalem* (v. 10), for he shall have no occasion for them while he himself rides upon an ass. He will, in kindness to his people, cut off their horses and chariots, that they may not cut themselves off from God by putting that confidence in them which they should put in the power of God only. He will himself undertake their protection, will himself be *a wall of fire about Jerusalem* and give his angels charge concerning it (those *chariots of fire and horses of fire*), and then the chariots and horses they had in their service shall be discarded and cut off as altogether needless. 2. It shall be propagated and established by the preaching of the gospel, the *speaking of peace to the heathen*; for *Christ came and preached peace to those that were afar off and to those that were nigh*; and so established his kingdom by proclaiming *on earth peace, and good-will towards men*. 3. His kingdom, as far as it prevails in the minds of men and has the ascendant over them, will make them peaceable, and slay all enmities; it will cut off the battle-bow, and *beat swords into plough-shares*. It will not only command the peace, but will *create the fruit of the lips, peace*. 4. It shall extend itself to all parts of the world, in defiance of the opposition given to it. "The chariot and horse that come against Ephraim and Jerusalem, to oppose the progress of Zion's King, shall be cut off; his gospel shall be preached to the world, and be received among the heathen, so that *his dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth*, as was foretold by David," Ps. 72:8. The preachers of the gospel shall carry it from one country, one island, to another, till some of the remotest corners of the world are enlightened and reduced by it.

IV. Here is an account of the great benefit procured for mankind by the Messiah, which is redemption from extreme misery, typified by the deliverance of the Jews out of their captivity in Babylon (v. 11): "*As for thee also* (thee, O daughter of

Jerusalem! or thee, O Messiah the Prince!) *by the blood of thy covenant*, by force and virtue of the covenant made with Abraham, sealed with the blood of circumcision, and the covenant made with Israel at Mount Sinai, sealed with the blood of sacrifices, in pursuance and performance of that covenant, *I have now of late sent forth thy prisoners*, thy captives out of Babylon, which was to them a most uncomfortable place, as *a pit* in which was *no water*." It was part of the covenant that, if in the land of their captivity, they sought the Lord, he would be found of them, Lev. 26:42, 44, 45; Deu. 30:4. It was *by the blood of that covenant*, typifying the blood of Christ, in whom all God's covenants with man are yea and amen, that they were released out of captivity; and this was but a shadow of the great salvation wrought out by *thy King, O daughter of Zion!* Note, A sinful state is a state of bondage; it is a spiritual prison; it is a pit, or a dungeon, in which *there is no water*, no comfort at all to be had. We are all by nature prisoners in this pit; the *scripture has concluded* us all *under sin*, and bound us over to the justice of God. God is pleased to deal upon new terms with these prisoners, to enter into another covenant with them; the blood of Christ is the blood of that covenant, purchased it for us and all the benefits of it; by that blood of the covenant effectual provision is made for the sending forth of these prisoners upon easy and honourable terms, and proclamation made of *liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to those that were bound*, like Cyrus's proclamation to the Jews in Babylon, which all those whose spirits God stirs up will come and take the benefit of.

Verses 12-17

The prophet, having taught those that had returned out of captivity to attribute their deliverance to the *blood of the covenant* and to the promise of the Messiah (for they were so wonderfully helped because that blessing was in them, was yet in the womb of their nation), now comes to encourage them with the prospect of a joyful and happy settlement, and of glorious times before them; and such a happiness they did enjoy, in a great measure, for some time; but these promises have their full accomplishment in the spiritual blessings of the gospel which we enjoy by Jesus Christ.

I. They are invited to look unto Christ, and flee unto him as their city of refuge (v. 12): *Turn you to the strong-hold, you prisoners of hope*. The Jews that had returned out of captivity into their own land were yet, in effect, but *prisoners* (*We are servants this day*, Neh. 9:36), yet *prisoners of hope*, or *expectation*, for God had given them a *little reviving in their bondage*, Ezra 9:8, 9. Those that yet continued in Babylon, detained by their affairs there, yet lived in hope some time or other to see their own land again. Now both these are directed to turn their eyes upon the Messiah, set before them in the promise as their strong-hold, to shelter themselves in him, and stay themselves upon him, for the perfecting of the mercy which by his grace, and for his sake, was so gloriously begun. *Look unto him, and be you saved*, Isa. 45:22. The promise of the Messiah was the strong-hold of the faithful long before his coming; they saw his day at a distance and were glad, and the believing expectation of the *redemption in Jerusalem* was long the support and *consolation of Israel*, Lu. 2:25, 38. They, in their dangers and distresses, were ready to turn towards this and the other creature for relief; but the prophets directed them still to turn to Christ, and to comfort themselves with the joy of their king coming to them with salvation. But, as their deliverance was typical of our redemption by Christ (v. 11), so this invitation to the strong-hold speaks the language of the gospel-call. Sinners are prisoners, but they are prisoners of hope; their case is sad, but it is not desperate; yet now there is hope in Israel concerning them. Christ

is a strong-hold for them, a strong tower, in whom they may be safe and quiet from the fear of the wrath of God, the curse of the law, and the assaults of their spiritual enemies. To him they must turn by a lively faith; to him they must flee, and trust in his name.

II. They are assured of God's favour to them: "*Even to day do I declare*, when things are at the worst, and you think your case deplorable to the last degree, yet I solemnly promise that *I will render double unto thee*, to thee, O Jerusalem! to every one of you prisoners of hope. I will give you comforts double to the sorrows you have experienced, or blessings double to what I ever bestowed upon your fathers, when their condition was at the best; the glory of your latter state, as well as of your latter house, shall be greater, shall be twice as great as that of your former." And so it was no otherwise than by the coming of the Messiah, the preaching of his gospel, and the setting up of his kingdom; these spiritual blessings in heavenly things were double to what they had ever enjoyed in their most prosperous state. As a pledge of this, in the fulness of time God here promises to the Jews victory, plenty, and joy, in their own land, which yet should be but a type and shadow of more glorious victories, riches, and joys, in the kingdom of Christ.

1. They shall triumph over their enemies. The Jews, after their return, were surrounded with enemies on all sides. They were *as a speckled bird*; all the birds of the field were against them. Their land lay between the two potent kingdoms of Syria and Egypt, branches of the Grecian monarchy, and what frequent dangers they should be in between them was foretold, Dan. 11. But it is here promised that out of them all the Lord would deliver them; and this promise had its primary accomplishment in the times of the Maccabees, when the Jews made head against their enemies, kept their head above water, and, after many struggles and difficulties, came to be head over them. It is promised, (1.) That they shall be instruments in God's hand for the defeating and baffling of their persecutors: "*I have bent Judah for me*, as my bow of steel; that *bow I have filled with Ephraim* as my arrows, have drawn it up to its full bent, till the arrow be at the head;" for some think that this is signified by the phrase of *filling the bow*. The expressions here are very fine, and the figures lively. Judah had been *taught the use of the bow* (2 Sa. 1:18), and Ephraim had been famous for it, Ps. 78:9. But let them not think that they gain their successes by their own bow, for they themselves are no more than God's bow and his arrows, tools in his hands, which he makes use of and manages as he pleases, which he holds as his bow and directs to the mark as his arrows. The best and bravest of men are but what God makes them, and do no more service than he enables them to do. The preachers of the gospel were the bow in Christ's hand, with which he went forth, he went on, *conquering and to conquer*, Rev. 6:2. The following words explain this: *I have raised up and animated thy sons, O Zion! against thy sons, O Greece!* This was fulfilled when *against Antiochus*, one of the kings of the Grecian monarchy, the people that knew their God were *strong and did exploits*, Dan. 11:32. And they in the hand of an almighty God were made *as the sword of a mighty man*, which none can stand before. Wicked men are said to be God's sword (Ps. 17:13), and sometimes good men are made so; for he employs both as he pleases. (2.) That God will be captain, and commander-in-chief, over them, in every expedition and engagement (v. 14): *The Lord shall be seen over them*; he shall make it appear that he presides in their affairs, and that in all their motions they are under his direction, as apparently, though not as sensibly, as he was *seen over Israel* in the pillar of cloud and fire when he led them through the wilderness. [1.] Is their army to

be raised, or mustered, and brought into the field? *The Lord shall blow the trumpet*, to gather the forces together, to proclaim the war, to sound the alarm, and to give directions which way to march, which way to move; for, if God blow the trumpet, it shall not give an uncertain sound, nor a feeble ineffectual one. [2.] Is the army taking the field, and entering upon action? Whatever enterprise the campaign is opened with, God shall go forth at the head of their forces, *with whirlwinds of the south*, which were of incredible swiftness and fierceness; and before these whirlwinds thy sons, O Greece! shall be as chaff. [3.] Is the army actually engaged? God's *arrows shall go forth as lightning*, so strongly, so suddenly, so irresistibly; his *lightnings* shall go forth *as arrows* and *scattered them*, that is, he *shot out his lightnings and discomfited them*. This alludes to that which God had done for Israel of old when he brought them out of Egypt, and into Canaan, and had its accomplishment partly in the wonderful successes which the Jews had against their neighbours that attacked them in the time of the Maccabees, by the special appearances of the divine Providence for them, and perfectly in the glorious victories gained by the cross of Christ and the preaching of the cross over Satan and all the powers of darkness, whereby we are made more than conquerors. [4.] Are they in danger of being overpowered by the enemy? *The Lord of hosts shall defend them* (v. 15); *The Lord their God shall save them* (v. 16); so that their enemies shall not prevail over them, nor prey upon them. God shall be unto them for defence as well as offence, *the shield of their help* as well as *the sword of their excellency*, and this as *the Lord of hosts*, who has power to defend them, and as *their God*, who is engaged by promise to defend them, and by the property he has in them. He shall save them in *that day*, that critical dangerous day, *as the flock of his people*, with the same care and tenderness that the shepherd protects his sheep with. Those are safe whom God saves. [5.] Did their enemies hope to swallow them up? It shall be turned upon them, and they shall *devour* their enemies, and shall *subdue with sling-stones*, for want of better weapons, those that come forth against them. The *stones of the brook*, when God pleases, shall do as great execution as the best train of artillery; for the *stars in their courses* shall fight on the same side. Goliath was subdued with a sling-stone. Having subdued, they shall *devour, shall drink* the blood of their enemies, as it were, and, as conquerors are wont to do, they shall *make a noise as through wine*. It is usual for conquerors with loud huzzas and acclamations to glory in their victories and proclaim them. We read of those that *shout for mastery*, and of the *shout of a king* among God's people. They shall be filled with blood and spoil, as the bowls and basins of the temple, or the *corners of the altar*, were wont to be filled with the blood of the sacrifices; for their enemies shall fall as victims to divine justice.

2. They shall triumph in their God. They shall take the comfort and give God the glory of their successes. So some read v. 15. *They shall eat* (that is, they shall quietly enjoy) what they have got; God will give them power to eat it *after they have subdued the sling-stones* (that is, their enemies that slung stones at them), and *they shall drink and make a noise*, a joyful noise, before the Lord their maker and protector, *as through wine*, as men are merry at a banquet of wine. *Being not drunk with wine, wherein is excess*, but *filled with the Spirit*, they shall *speak* to themselves and one another *in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs*, as those that are drunk do with vain and foolish songs, Eph. 5:18, 19. And, in the fulness of their joy, they shall offer abundance of sacrifices to the honour of God, so that *they shall fill both the bowls and the corners of the altar* with the fat and blood of their sacrifices. And, when they thus triumph in their successes, their joy shall terminate in God as their God, the God

of their salvation. They shall triumph, (1.) In the love he has for them, and the relation wherein they stand to him, that they are *the flock of his people* and he is their Shepherd, and that they are to him *as the stones of a crown*, which are very precious and of great value, and which are kept under a strong guard. Never was any king so pleased with the jewels of his crown as God is, and will be, with his people, who are near and dear unto him, and in whom he glories. They are a *crown of glory* and a *royal diadem* in his hand, Isa. 62:2, 3. And *they shall be mine, saith the Lord, in that day when I make up my jewels*, Mal. 3:17. And *they shall be lifted up as an ensign upon his land*, as the royal standard is displayed in token of triumph and joy. God's people are his glory; so he is pleased to make them, so he is pleased to reckon them. He sets them up as a banner upon his own land, waging war against those who hate him, to whom it is a flag of defiance, while it is a centre of unity to all that love him, to all the children of God, that are scattered abroad, who are invited to come and enlist themselves under this banner, Isa. 11:10, 12. (2.) In the provision he makes for them, v. 15. This is the matter of their triumph (v. 17): *For how great is his goodness and how great is his beauty!* This is the substance, this the burden, of the songs wherewith they shall *make a noise* before the Lord. We are here taught, [1.] To admire and praise the amiableness of God's being: *How great is his beauty!* All the perfections of God's nature conspire to make him infinitely lovely in the eyes of all that know him. They are to him *as the stones of a crown*; but what is he to them? Our business in the temple is to *behold the beauty of the Lord* (Ps. 27:4), and *how great is that beauty!* How far does it transcend all other beauties, particularly the *beauty of his holiness*. This may refer to the Messiah, to Zion's *King that cometh*. See *that king in his beauty* (Isa. 33:17), who is *fairer than the children of men, the fairest of ten thousand, and altogether lovely*. Though, in the eye of the world, he had no form or comeliness, in the eye of faith how great is his beauty! [2.] To admire and give thanks for the gifts of God's favour and grace, his bounty as well as his beauty; for *how great is his goodness!* How rich in mercy is he! How deep, how full, are its springs! How various, how plenteous, how precious, are its streams! What a great deal of good does God do! How rich in mercy is he! Here is an instance of his goodness to his people: *Corn shall make the young men cheerful and new wine the maids*; that is, God will bless his people with an abundance of the fruits of the earth. Whereas they had been afflicted with scarcity to such a degree that the *young men* and the *maidens* were ready to swoon and faint away for hunger and thirst (Lam. 2:12, 21; 4:7, 8; 5:10), now they shall have bread enough and to spare, not water only, but *wine, new wine*, which shall make the young people grow and be cheerful, and (which some have observed to be the effect of plenty and the cheapness of corn) the poor will be encouraged to marry, and re-people the land, when they shall have wherewithal to maintain their families. Note, What good gifts God bestows upon us we must serve him cheerfully with, and must race the streams up to the fountain, and, when we are refreshed with corn and wine, must say, *How great is his goodness!*

Chapter 10

The scope of this chapter is much the same with that of the foregoing chapter—to encourage the Jews that had returned with hopes that though they had been under divine rebukes for their negligence in rebuilding the temple, and were now surrounded with enemies and dangers, yet God would do them good, and make them prosperous at home and victorious abroad. Now, I. They are here directed to eye the great God in all events that concerned them, and, both in the evils they suffered and in the comforts they desired, to acknowledge his hand (v. 1-4). II. They are encouraged to expect strength and success from him in all their struggles with the enemies of their church and state, and to hope that the issue would be glorious at last (v. 5–12).

Verses 1-4

Gracious things and glorious ones, very glorious and very gracious, were promised to this poor afflicted people in the foregoing chapter; now here God intimates to them that he will *for these things be enquired of* by them, and that he expects they should acknowledge him in all their ways and in all his ways towards them—and not idols that were rivals with him for their respects.

I. The prophet directs them to apply to God by prayer for rain in the season thereof. He had promised, in the close of the foregoing chapter, that there should be great plenty of corn and wine, whereas for several years, by reason of unseasonable weather, there had been great scarcity of both; but the earth will not yield its fruits unless the heavens water it, and therefore they must look up to God for the *dew of heaven*, in order to the fatness and fruitfulness of the earth (v. 1): "*Ask you of the Lord rain. Do not pray to the clouds, nor to the stars, for rain, but to the Lord; for he it is that hears the heavens, when they hear the earth,*" Hos. 2:21. Seasonable rain is a great mercy, which we must *ask of God, rain in the time of the latter rain*, when there is most need of it. The former rain fell at the seed-time, in autumn, the latter fell in the spring, between March and May, which brought the corn to an ear and filled it. If either of these rains failed, it was very bad with that land; for from the end of May to September they never had any rain at all. Jerome, who lived in Judea, says that he never saw any rain there in June or July. They are directed to ask for it *in the time* when it used to come. Note, We must, in our prayers, dutifully attend the course of Providence; we must ask for mercies in their proper time, and not expect that God should go out of his usual way and method for us. But, since sometimes God denied rain in the usual time as a token of his displeasure, they must pray for it then as a token of his favour, and they shall not pray in vain. *Ask and it shall be given you. So the Lord shall make bright clouds* (which, though they are without rain themselves, are yet presages of rain)—*lightnings* (so the margin reads it), *for he maketh lightnings for the rain. He will give them showers of rain* in great abundance, and so give to *every one grass in the field*; for God is universally good, and *makes his rain to fall upon the just and the unjust*.

II. He shows them the folly of making their addresses to idols as their fathers had done (v. 2): *The idols have spoken vanity*; the teraphim, which they courted and consulted in their distress, were so far from being able to command rain for them that they could not so much as tell them when they should have rain. They pretended to promise them rain at such a time, but it did not come. *The diviners*, who were the prophets of those idols, *have seen a lie* (their visions were all a cheat and a sham); and *they*

have told false dreams, such as the event did not answer, which proved that they were not from God. Thus they *comforted in vain* those that consulted the lying oracles; all the *vanities of the heathen* put together could not *give rain*, Jer. 14:22. Yet this was not the worst of it; they not only got nothing by the false gods, but they lost the favour of the true God, for *therefore they went their way* into captivity *as a flock* driven into the fold, and *they were troubled* with one vexation after another, as scattered sheep are, *because there was no shepherd*, no prince to rule them, no priest to intercede for them, none to take care of them and keep them together. Those that wandered after strange gods were made to wander, into strange nations.

III. He shows them the hand of God in all the events that concerned them, both those that made against them and those that made for them, v. 3. Let them consider, 1. When every thing went cross it was God that walked contrary to them (v. 3): "*My anger was kindled against the shepherds* that should have fed the flock, but neglected it, and starved it. I was displeased at the wicked magistrates and ministers, the idol-shepherds." The captivity in Babylon was a token of God's anger against them; in it likewise he *punished the goats*, those of the flock that were filthy and mischievous; they were set on the left hand, to go away into punishment. Though the body of the nation suffered in the captivity, yet it was only the goats and the shepherds that God was angry with, and that he punished; the same affliction to others came from the love of God, and was but a fatherly chastisement, which to them came from his wrath, and was a judicial punishment. 2. When things began to change for the better it was God that gave them the happy turn. "He has now *visited his flock* with favour, to enquire after them, and provides what he finds proper for them, and he has made them *as his goodly horse in the battle*, has beautified them, taken care of them, managed and made use of them, as a man does the horse he rides on, has made them valuable in themselves and formidable to those about them, *as his goodly horse*." It is God that makes us what we are, and it is with us as he appoints.

IV. He shows them that every creature is to them what God makes it to be (v. 4): *Out of him came forth the corner, out of him the nails*. 1. All the power that was engaged against them was from God. *Out of him* came all the combined force of their enemies; *every oppressor together* (and the oppressors of Israel were not a few) did but what his hand and his counsel determined before to be done; nor could they have had such power against them unless it had been given them from above. 2. All the power likewise that was engaged for them was derived from him and depended on him. Out of him came forth *the corner-stone* of the building, the power of magistrates, which keeps the several parts of the state together. Princes are often called the *corners of the people*, as 1 Sa. 14:38, marg. Out of him came forth *the nail* that fixed the state, the *nail in the sure place* (Isa. 22:23), the *nail in his holy place*, Ezra 9:8. Out of him came forth *the battle-bow*, the military power, and out of him *every oppressor*, or exactor, that had the civil power in his hand; and therefore to God, the fountain of power, we must always have an eye, and see every man's judgment proceeding from him.

Verses 5-12

Here are divers precious promises made to the people of God, which look further than to the state of the Jews in the latter days of their church, and have certain reference to the spiritual Israel of God, the gospel-church, and all true believers.

I. They shall have God's favour and presence, and shall be owned and accepted of him. This is the foundation of all the rest: *The Lord is with them*, v. 5. He espouses their cause, takes their part, is on their side; and, if he be for them, who can be against

them? Again (v. 6), *I have mercy upon them*. All their dignity and joy are owing purely to God's mercy; and mercy, as it supposes misery, so it excludes merit. They had been cast off, the effect of which could not but be misery; they had been justly cast off, and therefore could pretend to merit nothing at God's hand but wrath and the curse; yet it is promised, *They shall be as though I had not cast them off*. The transgressions of their fathers, for which they had been rejected, shall not only not be visited upon them, but shall not be so much as remembered against them. God will be as perfectly reconciled to them as if he had never contended with them, and the falling out of these lovers shall rather be the renewing than the weakening of love. They shall have such a full assurance of God's being reconciled to them, and upon that shall be so well reconciled to themselves, that they shall be as easy as if they had never been cast off; and their condition, after their restoration to the divine favour, shall be so very happy that there shall not remain the least scar from the wounds which were given them by their being cast off. Such favour does God show to returning repenting sinners, who were by nature at a distance, and children of wrath; such fellowship are they admitted into, and such freedom does he use with them, that they are *as though they had never been cast off*. 1. The covenant they are admitted into is the same that ever it was: *I am the Lord their God*, according to the original contract, the covenant made with their fathers. 2. The communion they are admitted into is the same that ever it was: *I will hear them*. They shall be as welcome as ever to speak to him, and as sure as ever to receive from him an answer of peace; for, as he never did, so he never will, say to Jacob's seed, *Seek you me in vain*.

II. They shall be victorious over their enemies, that would draw them from either their duty to God or their comfort in God (v. 5): *They shall be as mighty men*, that are both strong in body and bold in spirit, men of vigour, men of valour, effective men. *Those of Ephraim*, as well as those of Judah, shall be *like a mighty man* (v. 7), that dares to go about a difficult enterprise and is able to go through with it. They shall, as mighty men, *tread down their enemies in the battle*, as the dirt that is thrown out of the houses is trodden with other dirt *in the mire of the streets*. And *they shall therefore fight, because the Lord is with them*. Some would argue that they may *therefore* sit still, and do nothing, because the Lord is with them, who can and will do all. No; God's gracious presence with us to help us must not supersede, but quicken and animate, our endeavours to help ourselves; and we must therefore *work out our salvation with fear and trembling*, because *it is God that works in us both to will and to do*. They shall fight with readiness and resolution because, if God be with them, they are sure to be conquerors, more than conquerors. For then *the riders on horses shall be confounded*. The cavalry of the enemies shall be routed, and put into disorder, by the infantry of the Jews. The preachers of the gospel of Christ went forth to war a good warfare; they charged bravely, because God was with them; and the *riders on horses* that opposed them *were confounded*, for God chose the *weak and foolish things of the world to confound the wise and mighty*. But whence have they all this might? How come they to be so able, so active? It is in the Lord, and in the power of his might, that they are so (v. 6): *I will strengthen the house of Judah, and so I will save the house of Joseph*. Note, God saves us by strengthening us, and works out our happiness by working in us to do our duty. And thus we are engaged to the utmost diligence in using the strength God gives us; and yet, when all is done, God must have the glory of all. God is our strength, and so becomes both our song and our salvation.

III. Those of them that are dispersed shall be gathered together into one body (v. 6): *I will bring them again to place them*,

bring them from other lands to place them in their own land. This was a token of their being perfectly restored to all their other ancient privileges—they shall be restored to the possession of their own land. This was fulfilled when the *children of God that were scattered abroad* were by faith in Christ incorporated in the gospel-church, and Jews and Gentiles became *one fold*, Jn. 10:16. In order to this (v. 8) *I will hiss for them*, or, rather, *whistle* for them, as the shepherd with his pipe calls his sheep together, that *know his voice*; and so *I will gather them*. The preaching of the gospel was, as it were, God's hissing for souls to come to Jesus Christ, his calling in his scattered sheep to the green pastures. *I will gather them, for I have redeemed them*. Note, Those whom Christ has redeemed by his blood God will gather by his grace, as a *hen gathers her brood under her wings*. This promise is enlarged upon v. 10, *I will bring them again also out of the land of Egypt*. Some think this was literally fulfilled when Ptolemaeus Philadelphus king of Egypt sent 120,000 Jews out of his country into their own land, as was the promise of gathering them out of Assyria by Alexander the son of Antiochus Epiphanes. But it has its spiritual accomplishment in the gathering in of precious souls out of a bondage worse than that in Egypt or Assyria, and the bringing of them into the glorious liberties of the children of God and their enjoyments, which are as the beautiful fruitful pastures in *the land of Gilead and Lebanon*. All the land of promise is theirs, even Gilead, the utmost border of it eastward, and Lebanon, the utmost border northward. But how shall this be? How shall a people so dispersed be got together? How shall those that are set at such a distance from their own country be brought to it again? It is true the difficulties seem insuperable, but they shall be got over as easily, as effectually as those that lay in the way of their deliverance out of Egypt and their entrance into Canaan: *He shall pass through the sea with affliction*, as of old through the Red Sea, to the sore affliction of Pharaoh and his hosts, or to the sore affliction of the sea, the waves whereof *he shall smite*, so that it shall be *driven back*, as when *the sea saw and fled*, Ps. 114:3. And *all the deeps of the river* (all the rivers, though ever so deep) *shall dry up*, as Jordan did, to make way for Israel's passage into that good land which God had given them. Does *the pride of Assyria* stand in the way of their deliverance? He shall give check to it who sets bounds to the *proud waves of the sea*, and it *shall be brought down*. Does the sceptre of Egypt oppose it? That shall *depart away*, so that it shall not be able to obstruct the gathering in of God's Israel when his time shall come for the doing of it. When the gospel-church was to be gathered out of all nations by the preaching of the gospel great opposition was given to it by the enraged combined powers of earth and hell. Insuperable difficulties seemed to be in the way of it. But, by a divine power going along with the doctrine of Christ, it became *mighty to the pulling down of strong holds*, and the conversion and salvation of thousands. Then the sea fled, and Jordan was *driven back at the presence of the Lord*.

IV. They shall greatly multiply, and the church, that new world, shall be replenished (v. 8): *They shall increase as they have increased* formerly in Egypt, and great additions shall be made to their numbers, as in the days of David and Solomon. When God gathers his redeemed ones to himself they shall help to gather in others with them, and their motion homeward shall be like that of a snow-ball. *Crescit eundo—The further it goes the larger it grows by accretion*. *I will gather them, and they shall increase*. Note, The church of Christ is a growing body, as long as it is in the present state of minority, till it comes to *the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ*. There are added to it *daily such as shall be saved*. 1. It shall spread to distant places. It shall fill Canaan, even to the lands of Gilead and Lebanon, so that no more place, no more room, shall be found for it

there, v. 10. *In Judah* only God had been known, and his name was great in Israel only; here only he revealed his statutes and judgments. But in gospel-times that place shall be much too strait; the church's tent must be enlarged, and its cords lengthened: Then *I will sow them among the people*, v. 9. Their scattering shall be like the scattering of seed in the ground, not to bury it, but to increase it, that it may bring forth much fruit. The Jews are said to be dispersed *into every nation under heaven* (Acts 2:5); and, as it was their troubles that dispersed some of them, so perhaps others transplanted themselves into colonies because the land of Israel was too strait for them; and many were natives of other nations, but proselyted to the Jewish religion. Now these were *sown among the people*, Hos. 2:23. And this contributed very much to the spreading of the gospel. The Jews that came from all parts to worship at Jerusalem fetched thence the gospel light and fire to their own countries, as those Acts 2, and the eunuch, Acts 8. And their own synagogues in the several cities of the Gentiles were the first receptacles of the apostles and their preaching, wherever they came. Thus when God *sowed them among the people*, that they might not get hurt by the Gentiles, but do good to them, he took care that they should *remember him*, and make mention of his name *in far countries*; and, by keeping up the knowledge of God among them as he had revealed himself in the Old Testament, they would be the more ready to admit the knowledge of Christ as he has revealed himself in the New Testament. 2. It shall last to future ages. The church shall not be *res unius aetatis*—*a temporary thing*, but a seed in it shall *serve the Lord*, v. 7. *Yea, their children shall see it and be glad*; and *they shall live with their children, and turn again*, v. 9. Converts to Christ shall have their children about them, whom they shall teach the knowledge of the Lord, and bring with them when they turn again to the holy land and the way of holiness. It was said to those to whom the gospel was first preached, *The promise is to you and to your children*, Acts 2:39. They shall be *so sown among the people* as never to be extirpated. Christ's family upon earth shall never be extinct, nor his purchased possession lost for want of heirs.

V. God himself will be both their strength and their song. 1. In him they shall be comforted, and shall have abundant satisfaction (v. 7): *Their heart shall rejoice as through wine*; for Christ's love, which is their joy, is *better than wine*. They shall be *like a mighty man*, and *their heart shall rejoice*. When we resolutely resist, and so overcome, our spiritual enemies, then our hearts shall rejoice. But we ruin our own joy if our resistance be feeble and we yield to the temptations of Satan. Their *heart shall rejoice*, and then they shall be as a *mighty man*; for the *joy of the Lord* will be *our strength*. And with their graces their joys shall be propagated: *Their children shall see it and be glad, and their hearts also shall rejoice in the Lord*. It is good to acquaint children betimes with the delights of religion, and to make the services of it as pleasant as may be to them, that, learning betimes to rejoice in the Lord, they may with purpose of heart cleave to him. 2. By him they shall be carried on with vigour, and enlargement of heart, in his service (v. 12): *I will strengthen them in the Lord*, strengthen them for their walk and work, as well as for their warfare. It is the God of Israel that *gives strength and power unto his people*, that strengthens all their powers and faculties for spiritual performances, above what they are by nature and against what they are by the corruption of nature. Now observe, (1.) How they are thus enabled and invigorated for their duty: *I the Lord will strengthen them in the Lord*, in the *Messiah*, who is *Jehovah our strength*, as well as *Jehovah our righteousness*. Strength is treasured up for us in Christ, and from him it is communicated to us. It is *through Christ strengthening us* that we can *do all things, and without him*

we can do nothing. His strength is commanded him for this purpose, Ps. 68:28. (2.) What good use they shall make of this strength given unto them: They shall walk up and down in his name. If God strengthen us, we must bestir ourselves, must walk up and down in all the duties of the Christian life, must be active and busy in the work of God, must walk up and down as industrious men do, losing no time, and letting slip no opportunity. But still we must walk up and down in the name of Christ, must do all by warrant from him and in dependence on him, with an eye to his word as our rule and his glory as our end. To us to live must be Christ; and, whatever we do in word or deed, we must do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, that we receive not the strengthening grace of God in vain. See Ps. 80:17, 18.

Chapter 11

God's prophet, who, in the chapters before, was an ambassador sent to promise peace, is here a herald sent to declare war. The Jewish nation shall recover its prosperity, and shall flourish for some time and become considerable; it shall be very happy, at length, in the coming of the long-expected Messiah, in the preaching of his gospel, and in the setting up of his standard there. But, when thereby the chosen remnant among them are effectually called in and united to Christ, the body of the nation, persisting in unbelief, shall be utterly abandoned and given up to ruin, for rejecting Christ; and it is this that is foretold here in this chapter—the Jews rejecting Christ, which was their measure-filling sin, and the wrath which for that sin came upon them to the uttermost. Here is, I. A prediction of the destruction itself that should come upon the Jewish nation (v. 1-3). II. The putting of it into the hands of the Messiah. 1. He is charged with the custody of that flock (v. 4-6). 2. He undertakes it, and bears rule in it (v. 7, 8). 3. Finding it perverse, he gives it up (v. 9), breaks his shepherd's staff (v. 10, 11), resents the indignities done him and the contempt put upon him (v. 12, 13), and then breaks his other staff (v. 14). 4. He turns them over into the hands of foolish shepherds, who, instead of preventing, shall complete their ruin, and both the blind leaders and the blind followers shall fall together into the ditch (v. 15–17). This is foretold to the poor of the flock before it comes to pass, that, when it does come to pass, they may not be offended.

Verses 1-3

In dark and figurative expressions, as is usual in the scripture predictions of things at a great distance, that destruction of Jerusalem and of the Jewish church and nation is here foretold which our Lord Jesus, when the time was at hand, prophesied of very plainly and expressly. We have here, 1. Preparation made for that destruction (v. 1): "*Open thy doors, O Lebanon! Thou wouldst not open them to let thy king in—he came to his own and his own received him not; now thou must open them to let thy ruin in. Let the gates of the forest, and all the avenues to it, be thrown open, and let the fire come in and devour its glory.*" Some by Lebanon here understand the temple, which was built of cedars from Lebanon, and the stones of it white as the snow of Lebanon. It was burnt with fire by the Romans, and its gates were forced open by the fury of the soldiers. To confirm this, they tell a story, that forty years before the destruction of the second temple the gates of it opened of their own accord, upon which prodigy Rabbi Johanan made this remark (as it is found in one of the Jewish authors), "Now I know," said he, "that the destruction of the temple is at hand, according to the prophecy of Zechariah, *Open thy doors, O Lebanon! that the fire may devour thy cedars.*" Others understand it of Jerusalem, or rather of the whole land of Canaan, to which Lebanon was an inlet on the north. All shall lie open to the invader, and the cedars, the mighty and eminent men, shall be devoured, which cannot but alarm those of an inferior rank, v. 2. If *the cedars have fallen* (if *all the mighty are spoiled*, and brought to ruin), let the *fir-tree howl*. How can the slender fir-trees stand if stately cedars fall? If cedars are devoured by fire, it is time for the fir-trees to howl; for no wood is so combustible as that of the fir. And let the *oaks of Bashan*, that lie exposed to every injury, *howl, for the forest of the vintage* (or the *flourishing vineyard*, that used to be guarded with a particular care) has come down, or (as some read it) when the *defenced forests*, such as Lebanon was, have come down. Note, The falls of the wise and good into sin, and the falls

of the rich and great into trouble, are loud alarms to those that are every way their inferiors not to be secure. 2. Lamentation made for the destruction (v. 3): *There is a voice of howling*. Those who have fallen howl for grief and shame, and those who see their own turn coming howl for fear. But the great men especially receive the alarm with the utmost confusion. Those who were roaring in the day of their revels and triumphs are howling in the day of their terrors; *for now they are tormented* more than others. Those great men were by office shepherds, and such should have protected God's flock committed to their charge; it is the duty both of princes and priests. But they were as *young lions*, that made themselves a terror to the flock with their roaring and the flock a prey to themselves with their tearing. Note, It is sad with a people when those who should be as shepherds to them are as young lions to them. But what is the issue? The shepherds *howl*, for *their glory is spoiled*. Their pastures, and the flocks which covered them, which were the glory of the swains, are laid waste. The *young lions howl*, for *the pride of Jordan is spoiled*. The pride of Jordan was the thickets on the banks, in which the lions reposed themselves; and therefore, when the river overflowed and spoiled them, the lions came up from them (as we read Jer. 49:19), and they came up roaring. Note, When those who have power proudly abuse their power, and, instead of being shepherds, are as young lions, they may expect that the righteous God will humble their pride and break their power.

Verses 4-14

The prophet here is made a type of Christ, as the prophet Isaiah sometimes was; and the scope of these verses is to show that *for judgment Christ came into this world* (Jn. 9:39), for judgment to the Jewish church and nation, which were, about the time of his coming, wretchedly corrupted and degenerated by the worldliness and hypocrisy of their rulers. Christ would have healed them, but they would not be healed; they are therefore left desolate, and abandoned to ruin. Observe here,

I. The desperate case of the Jewish church, under the tyranny of their own governors. Their slavery in their own country made them as miserable as their captivity in strange countries had done: *Their possessors slay them and sell them*, v. 5. In Zechariah's time we find the rulers and the nobles justly rebuked for *exacting usury of their brethren*; and the governors, even by their servants, oppressive to the people, Neh. 5:7, 15. In Christ's time the *chief priests* and the *elders*, who were the possessors of the flock, by their traditions, the commandments of men, and their impositions on the consciences of the people, became perfect tyrants, devoured their houses, engrossed their wealth, and fleeced the flock instead of feeding it. The Sadducees, who were deists, corrupted their judgments. The Pharisees, who were bigots for superstition, corrupted their morals, by making void the commandments of God, Mt. 15:16. Thus they slew the sheep of the flock, thus they sold them. They cared not what became of them so they could but gain their own ends and serve their own interests. And, 1. In this they justified themselves: They *slay them and hold themselves not guilty*. They think that there is no harm in it, and that they shall never be called to an account for it by the chief Shepherd; as if their power were given them for destruction, which was designed only for edification, and as if, because they sat in Moses's seat, they were not under the obligation of Moses's law, but might dispense with it, and with themselves in the breach of it, at their pleasure. Note, Those have their minds woefully blinded indeed who do ill and justify themselves in doing it; but God will not hold those guiltless who hold themselves so. 2. In this they affronted God, by giving him thanks for the gain of their oppression: They said, *Blessed be the Lord, for I am rich*,

as if, because they prospered in their wickedness, got money by it, and raised estates, God had made himself patron of their unjust practices, and Providence had become *particeps criminis—the associate of their guilt*. What is got honestly we ought to give God thanks for, and to bless him whose blessing *makes rich and adds no sorrow with it*. But with what face can we go to God either to beg a blessing upon the unlawful methods of getting wealth or to return him thanks for success in them? They should rather have gone to God to confess the sin, to take shame to themselves for it, and to vow restitution, than thus to mock him by making the gains of sin the gift of God, who *hates robbery for burnt-offerings*, and reckons not himself praised by the thanksgiving if he be dishonoured either in the getting or the using of that which we give him thanks for. 3. In this they put contempt upon the people of God, as unworthy their regard or compassionate consideration: *Their own shepherds pity them not*; they make them miserable, and then do not commiserate them. Christ had *compassion on the multitude because they fainted and were scattered abroad, as if they had no shepherd* (as really they had worse than none); but *their own shepherds pitied them not*, nor showed any concern for them. Note, It is ill for a church when its pastors have no tenderness, no compassion for precious souls, when they can look upon the ignorant, the foolish, the wicked, the weak, without pity.

II. The sentence of God's wrath passed upon them for their senselessness and stupidity in this condition. There was a general decay, nay, a destruction, of religion among them, and it was all one to them; they regarded it not. *My people love to have it so*, Jer. 5:31. Though they were *oppressed and broken in judgment*, yet they *willingly walked after the commandment*, Hos. 5:11. And, as their shepherds pitied them not, so they did not bemoan themselves; therefore God says (v. 6), *"I will no more pity the inhabitants of the land*. They have courted their own destruction, and so let their doom be." But those are truly miserable whom the God of mercy himself will no more have compassion upon. Those who are willing to have their consciences oppressed by those who *teach for doctrines the commandments of men* (as the Jews were, who called those *Rabbi, Rabbi*, that did so, Mt. 15:9; 23:7), are often punished by oppression in their civil interests, and justly, for those forfeit their own rights who tamely give up God's rights. The Jews did so; the Papists do so; and who can pity them if they be ruled with rigour? God here threatens them, 1. That he will deliver them into the hand of oppressors, *every one into his neighbour's hand*, so that they shall use one another barbarously. The several parties in Jerusalem did so; the *zealots*, the *seditions*, as they were called, committed greater outrages than the common enemy did, as Josephus relates in his history of the wars of the Jews. They shall be delivered every one *into the hand of his king*, that is, the Roman emperor, whom they chose to submit to rather than to Christ, saying, *We have no king but Caesar*. Thus they thought to ingratiate themselves with their lords and masters. But for this God brought the Romans upon them, who *took away their place and nation*. 2. That he will not deliver them out of their hands: *They shall smite the land*, the whole land, and *out of their hand I will not deliver them*; and, if the Lord do not help them, none else can, nor can they help themselves.

III. A trial yet made whether their ruin might be prevented by sending Christ among them as a shepherd; God had sent his servants to them in vain, *but last of all he sent unto them his Son, saying, They will reverence my Son*, Mt. 21:37. Divers of the prophets had spoken of him as the *Shepherd of Israel*, Isa. 40:11; Eze. 34:23. he himself told the Pharisees that he was the *Shepherd of the sheep*, and that those who pretended to be shepherds were *thieves and robbers* (Jn. 10:1, 2, 11), apparently

referring to this passage, where we have, 1. The charge he received from his Father to try what might be done with this flock (v. 4): *Thus saith the Lord my God* (Christ called his Father *his God* because he acted in compliance with his will and with an eye to his glory in his whole undertaking), *Feed the flock of the slaughter*. The Jews were God's flock, but they were *the flock of slaughter*, for their enemies had killed them all the day long and *accounted them as sheep for the slaughter*; their own *possessors slew them*, and God himself had doomed them to the slaughter. Yet "*feed them* by reproof instruction, and comfort; provide wholesome food for those who have so long been soured with the leaven of the scribes and Pharisees." *Other sheep he had, which were not of this fold*, and which afterwards must be *brought*; but he is first *sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel*, Mt. 15:24. 2. His acceptance of this charge, and his undertaking pursuant to it, v. 7. He does as it were say, *Lo, I come to do thy will, O my God!* and, since this is thy will, it is mine: *I will feed the flock of slaughter*. Christ will care for these lost sheep; he will go about among them, *teaching and healing even you, O poor of the flock!* Christ did not neglect the meanest, nor overlook them for their meanness. The shepherds that made a prey of them regarded not the poor; they were conversant with those only that they could get by; but Christ preached his gospel *to the poor*, Mt. 11:5. It was an instance of his humiliation that his converse was mostly with the inferior sort of people; his disciples, who were his constant attendants, were of the poor of the flock. 3. His furnishing himself with tools proper for the charge he had undertaken: *I took unto me two staves*, pastoral staves; other shepherds have but one crook, but Christ had two, denoting the double care he took of his flock, and what he did both for the souls and for the bodies of men. David speaks of God's *rod* and his *staff* (Ps. 23:4), a correcting rod and a supporting staff. One of these staves was called *Beauty*, denoting the temple, which is called *the beauty of holiness* and one of its gates *beautiful*, which Christ called his Father's house, and for which he showed a great zeal when he cleared it of the *buyers and sellers*; the other he called *Bands*, denoting their civil state, and the incorporate society of that nation, which Christ also took care of by preaching love and peace among them. Christ, in his gospel, and in all he did among them, consulted the advancement both of their civil and of their sacred interests. 4. His execution of his office, as the chief Shepherd. *He fed the flock* (v. 7), and he displaced those under-shepherds that were false to their trust (v. 8): *Three shepherds I cut off in one month*. Through the deficiency and uncertainty of the history of the Jewish church, in its latter ages, we know not what particular event this had its accomplishment in; in general, it seems to be an act of power and justice for the punishment of the sinful shepherds and the redress of the grievances of the abused flock. Some understand it of the three orders of princes, priests, and scribes or prophets, who, when Christ had finished his work, were laid aside for their unfaithfulness. Others understand it of the three sects among the Jews, of Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herodians, all whom Christ silenced in dispute (Mt. 22) and soon after *cut off*, all in a little time.

IV. Their enmity to Christ, and making themselves odious to him. He came to his own, the sheep of his own pasture; it might have been expected that between them and him there would be an entire affection, as between the shepherd and his sheep; but they conducted themselves so ill that *his soul loathed them*, was *straitened* towards them (so it may be read); he intended them kindness, but could not do them the kindness he intended them, *because of their unbelief*, Mt. 13:58. He was disappointed in them, discouraged concerning them, *grieved* for them, not only for the shepherds, whom he cut off, but for the people, whom

Christ often looked upon with grief in his heart and tears in his eyes. Their provocations even wore out his patience, and he was weary of that *faithless and perverse generation*. *Their soul also it abhorred me*; and therefore it was that his soul loathed them; for, whatever estrangement there is between God and man, it begins on man's side. The Jewish shepherds rejected this chief Shepherd, as the Jewish builders rejected this chief corner stone. They *had indignation* at Christ's doctrine and miracles, and his interest in the people, to whom they did all they could to render him odious, as they had made themselves odious to him. Note, There is a mutual enmity between God and wicked people; they are hateful to God and haters of God. Nothing speaks more the sinfulness and misery of an unregenerate state than this does. The carnal mind, the friendship of the world, are enmity to God, and God hates all the workers of iniquity; and it is easy to foresee what this will end in, if the quarrel be not taken up in time, Isa. 27:4, 5.

V. Christ's rejecting them as incurable, and leaving them their house desolate, Mt. 23:38. The things of their peace are now hidden from their eyes, because they knew not the day of their visitation. Here we have,

1. The sentence of their rejection passed (v. 9): *"Then said I, I will not feed you. I will take no further care of you; you shall not see me again; take your own course. As I will not feed you, so I will not cure you; that that dieth, let it die* (the Shepherd will do nothing to save its forfeited life); *that that is to be cut off, let it be cut off; that which will make itself a prey to the wolf, let it be a prey, and let the rest so far forget their own mild and gentle nature as to eat the flesh of one another; let these sheep fight like dogs."* Those that reject Christ will be certainly and justly rejected by him, and then are miserable of course.

2. A sign of it given (v. 10): *I took my staff, even Beauty, and cut it asunder*, in token of this, that he would be no longer a shepherd to them, as the lord high steward determines his commission by breaking his white staff, and as Moses's breaking the tables of the law put a stop, for the present, to the treaty between God and Israel. The breaking of this staff signified the breaking of God's covenant which he had *made with all the people*, the covenant of peculiarity made with all the tribes of *Israel*, and all other people who, by being proselyted to their religion, were incorporated into their nation. The Jewish church was now stripped of all its glory; its crown was profaned and cast to the ground, and all its honour laid in the dust; for God departed from it, and would no more own it for his. When Christ told them plainly that the *kingdom of God* should be *taken from them, and given to another people*, then he broke the *staff of Beauty*, Mt. 21:43. *And it was broken in that day*, though Jerusalem and the Jewish nation held up forty years longer, yet from that day we may reckon the staff of Beauty broken, v. 11. And though the great men did not, or would not, understand it as a divine sentence, but thought to put it by with a cold *God forbid* (Lu. 20:16), yet the *poor of the flock*, the disciples of Christ, that *waited on him*, and understood with what authority he spoke, and could distinguish the voice of their Shepherd from that of a stranger, *knew that it was the word of the Lord*, and trembled at it, and were confident that it should not fall to the ground. Note, Christ is waited on by the poor of the flock; he chose them to be with him, to be his pupils, to be his witnesses; the poor received him and his gospel, when those that had great possessions turned their backs upon him. And those that wait upon Christ, that sit at his feet, to hear and receive his words, shall *know of the doctrine whether it be of God*, Jn. 7:17.

3. A further reason given for their rejection. It was said before, *Their souls abhorred him*; and here we have an instance of it,

their buying and selling him for thirty pieces of silver, either thirty Roman pence, or rather thirty Jewish shekels; this is here foretold in somewhat obscure expressions, as it is fit that such particular prophecies should be delivered, lest otherwise the plainness of the prophecy might prevent the accomplishment of it. Here, (1.) The Shepherd comes to them for his wages (v. 12): "*If you think good, give me my price; you are weary of me, pay me off and discharge me; and, if not, forbear; if you be willing to continue me longer in your service, I will continue, or, if to turn me off without wages, I am content.*" Christ was no hireling, and yet the labourer is worthy of his hire. Compare with this what Christ said to Judas when he was going to sell him, "*What thou doest do quickly; be at a word with the chief priests; let them either take the bargain or leave it,*" Jn. 13:27. Those that betray Christ are not forced to it; they might have chosen. (2.) They value him at *thirty pieces of silver*. Many years' service he had done them as a Shepherd, yet this is all they will now turn him off with—"*A goodly price that I with all my care and pains was valued at by them.*" If Judas fixed this sum in his demand, it is observable that his name was *Judah*, the same name with that of the body of the people, for it was a national act; or, if (as it rather seems) the chief priests pitched upon this sum in their proffers, they were the representatives of the people; it was part of the priest's office to *put a value* upon the *devoted things* (Lev. 27:8), and thus they valued the Lord Jesus. it was the ordinary price of a slave, Ex. 21:32. Making light of Christ, and undervaluing the love of that great and good Shepherd, are the ruin of multitudes, and justly so. (3.) The silver being no way proportionable to his worth, it is *thrown to the potter* with disdain: "Let him take it to buy clay with, or for any use that a little money will serve to, for it is not worth hoarding; it may be enough for a potter's stock, but not for the pay of such a shepherd, much less for his purchase." So the prophet *cast the thirty pieces of silver to the potter in the house of the Lord*: "Let him take them, and do what he will with them." Now we find a particular accomplishment of this in the history of Christ's sufferings, and reference is had to this prophecy, Mt. 27:9, 10. *Thirty pieces of silver* was the very sum for which Christ was sold to the chief priests; the money, when Judas would not keep it, and the chief priests would not take it back was laid out in the purchase of *the potter's field*. Even that sudden resolve of the chief priests was according to an ancient prophecy and the more ancient counsel and foreknowledge of God.

4. The completing of their rejection in the cutting asunder of the other staff, v. 14. The former denoted the ruin of their church, by breaking the covenant between God and them—that defaced their *beauty*; this denotes the ruin of their state, by breaking the brotherhood between Judah and Israel, by reviving animosities and contention among them, such as were of old between Judah and Israel, the writing of whom as *one stick in the hand of the Lord* was one of the blessings promised after their return out of captivity, Eze. 37:19. But that union shall now be dissolved; they shall be crumbled into parties and factions, exasperated one against another; and their kingdom, being thus divided, shall be *brought to desolation*. (1.) Nothing ruins a people so certainly, so inevitably, as the breaking of *the staff of Bands*, and the weakening of the brotherhood among them; for hereby they become an easy prey to the common enemy. (2.) This follows upon the dissolving of the covenant between God and them, and the decay of religion among them. When iniquity abounds love waxes cold. No wonder if those fall out among themselves that have provoked God to fall out with them. When the staff of Beauty is broken the staff of Bands will not hold long. An unchurched people will soon be an undone people.

Verses 15-17

God, having shown the misery of this people in their being justly abandoned by the good Shepherd, here shows their further misery in being shamefully abused by a foolish shepherd. The prophet is himself to personate and represent this pretended shepherd (v. 15): *Take unto thee the instruments or accoutrements of a foolish shepherd*, that are no way fit for the business, such a shepherd's coat, and bag, and staff, as a foolish shepherd would appear in; for such a shepherd shall be set over them (v. 16), who, instead of protecting them, shall oppress them and do them mischief. 1. They shall be under the inspection of unfaithful ministers. Their scribes, and priests, and doctors of their law, shall bind heavy burdens upon them, and grievous to be borne, and, with their traditions imposed, shall make the ceremonial law much more a yoke than God had made it. The description here given of the foolish shepherd suits very well with the character Christ gives of the scribes and Pharisees, Mt. 23:2. They shall be under the tyranny of unmerciful princes, that shall rule them with rigour, and make their own land as much a house of bondage to them as ever Egypt or Babylon was. When they had rejected him *by whom princes decree justice* it was just that they should be turned over to those who *decree unrighteous decrees*. 3. They shall be imposed upon and deluded by false Christs and false prophets, as our Saviour foretold, Mt. 24:5. Many such there were, who by their seditious practices provoked the Romans, and hastened the ruin of the Jewish nation; but it is observable that they were never cheated by a counterfeit Messiah till they had refused and rejected the true Messiah. Now observe,

I. What a curse this foolish shepherd should be to the people, v. 16. God will, for their punishment, *raise up a foolish shepherd*, who will not do the duty of a shepherd; he will not *visit those that are cut off*, nor go after those that go astray, nor seek those that are missing, to find them out and bring them home, as the good shepherd does, Mt. 18:12, 13. Their shepherds take no care of the *young ones*, that need their care and are well worthy of it, as Christ does, Isa. 40:11. They do not *heal that which was broken*, which was worried and torn, but let it die of its bruises, when a little thing, in time, would have saved it. They do not *feed* those who, through weakness, *stand still*, and are ready to faint, and cannot get forward, but leave them behind, let who will take them up; they do not *carry* that which *stands still* (so some read it); they never do any thing to *support the weak* and comfort the *feeble-minded*; but, on the contrary, 1. They are luxurious themselves: They *eat of the flesh of the fat*; they will have of the best for themselves; and, like that *wicked servant* that said, *My lord delays his coming*, they *eat and drink with the drunken*, and *serve their own bellies*. 2. They are barbarous to the flock. Their passions are as ill-governed as their appetites, for, when they are in a rage against any of the flock, they *tear their very claws in pieces* by over-driving them; they beat their hoofs; they *smite their fellow servants*. *Woe unto thee, O land! when thy king is such a child!*

II. What a curse this foolish shepherd should bring upon himself (v. 17): *Woe to the idol-shepherd*, who, like an idol, has eyes and sees not, who, like an idol, receives abundance of respect and homage from the people and the chief of their offerings, but neither can nor will do them any kindness. He *leaves the flock* when they most need his care, leaves them destitute, and flees, *because he is a hireling*; his doom is that *the sword* of God's justice shall be *upon his arm* and *his right eye*, so that he shall quite lose the use of both. *His arm shall wither and be dried up*, so that he who would not help his friends when it was required shall not know how to help himself; *his right eye shall be utterly darkened*, that he shall not discern the danger that his flock is

in, nor know which way to look for relief. This was fulfilled when Christ said to the Pharisees, *I have come that those who see may be made blind*, Jn. 9:39. Those that have gifts which qualify them to do good, if they do not do good with them, shall be deprived of them; those that should have been workmen, but were slothful and would do nothing, will justly have their arm dried up; and those that should have been watchmen, but were sleepy and would never look about them, will justly have their eye blinded.

Chapter 12

The apostle (Gal. 4:25, 26) distinguishes between "Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children"—the remaining carcase of the Jewish church that rejected Christ, and "Jerusalem that is from above, that is free, and is the mother of us all"—the Christian church, the spiritual Jerusalem, which God has chosen to put his name there; in the foregoing chapter we read the doom of the former, and left that carcase to be a prey to the eagles that should be gathered to it. Now, in this chapter, we have the blessings of the latter, many precious promises made to the gospel-Jerusalem by him who (v. 1) declares his power to make them good. It is promised, I. That the attempts of the church's enemies against her shall be to their own ruin, and they shall find that it is at their peril if they do her any hurt (v. 2–4, 6). II. That the endeavours of the church's friends and patrons for her good shall be pious, regular, and successful (v. 5). III. That God will protect and strengthen the meanest and weakest that belong to his church, and work salvation for them (v. 7, 8). IV. That as a preparative for all this mercy, and a pledge of it, he will pour upon them a spirit of prayer and repentance, the effect of which shall be universal and very particular (v. 9–14). These promises were of use then to the pious Jews that lived in the troublous times under Antiochus, and other persecutors and oppressors; and they are still to be improved in every age for the directing of our prayers and the encouraging of our hopes with reference to the gospel-church.

Verses 1-8

Here is, I. The title of this charter of promises made to God's Israel; it is the *burden of the word of the Lord*, a divine prediction; it is of weight in the delivery of it; it is to be pressed upon people, and will be very pressing in the accomplishment of it; it is a *burden*, a heavy burden, to all the church's enemies, like that *talent of lead*, ch. 5:7, 8. But it is *for Israel*; it is for their comfort and benefit. As even the *fiery law* (Deu. 33:2), so the fiery prophecies and fiery providences that come from God's right hand, come for them; the word that speaks terror to their enemies speaks peace to them, as the pillar of cloud and fire, which turned a bright side towards the Israelites, to direct and encourage them, but a black side towards the Egyptians, to terrify and dispirit them. Happy are those that have even the burdens of God's word for them, as well as the blessings of it. II. The title of him that grants this charter, which is prefixed to it to show that he has both authority to make these promises and ability to make them good, for he is the Creator of the world and our Creator, and therefore has an incontestable irresistible dominion. 1. He *stretches out the heavens*; not only he did so at the first, when he said, *Let there be a firmament*, and he *made the firmament*, but he does so still; he keeps them stretched out *like a curtain*, keeps them from running in, and will do so till the end come, when *the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll*. No bounds can be set to his power who stretches out the heavens, nor can any thing be too hard for him. 2. He *lays the foundation of the earth*, and keeps it firm and fixed on its own basis, or rather on its own axis, though it is *founded on the seas* (Ps. 24:1, 2), nay, though it is *hung upon nothing*, Job 26:7. The founder of this earth is no doubt the ruler of it, and judges in it, and those deceive themselves who say, *The Lord has forsaken the earth*, for, if he had, it would have sunk, since it is he that not only did lay its foundations at first, but does still lay them, still uphold them. 3. He *forms the spirit of man within him*. He *made us these souls*, Jer. 38:16. He not only breathed into

the first man, but still breathes into every man the breath of life; the body is derived from the *fathers of our flesh*, but the soul is infused by the *Father of spirits*, Heb. 12:9. He *fashions men's hearts*; they are *in his hand*, and he turns them *as the rivers of water*, and casts them into what mould he pleases, so as to serve his own purposes with them; and he can therefore save his church by inspiriting his friends and dispiriting his enemies, and will eternally save all his chosen by forming their spirits anew.

III. The promises themselves that are here made them, by which the church shall be secured, and in which all its friends may enjoy a holy security.

1. It is promised that, whatever attacks the enemies of the church may make upon her purity or peace, they will certainly issue in their own confusion. The enemies of God and of his kingdom bear a great deal of malice and ill-will to Jerusalem, and form designs for its destruction; but it will prove, at last, that they are but preparing ruin for themselves; Jerusalem is in safety, and those are in all the danger who fight against it. This is here illustrated by three comparisons:—

(1.) *Jerusalem shall be a cup of trembling* to all that lay siege to it, v. 2. They promise themselves that it shall be to them a cup of wine, which they shall easily and with pleasure drink off, and they thirst for its spoils, nay, they thirst for its blood, as for such a cup; but it shall prove a *cup of slumber*, nay, a *cup of poison*, to them, which, when they take it into their hands, and think it is all their own, they shall not be able to drink off: the fumes of it shall give them enough. When *the kings were assembled* against her, and saw how *God was known in her palaces for a refuge*, they *trembled and hasted away; fear took hold upon them*, as we find, Ps. 48:3-6. Thus Alexander the Great was struck with amazement when he met Jaddus the high priest, and was deterred thereby from offering any violence to Jerusalem. When Sennacherib laid siege *against Judah and Jerusalem* he found them such a cup of stupifying wine as laid all his mighty men asleep, Ps. 76:5, 6. Some read it, *I will make Jerusalem a post of contrition or breaking*. Those that make any attempts upon Jerusalem do but run their heads against a post, which they cannot move, but are sure to hurt themselves. The *blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall* (Isa. 25:4), broken by it, but not shaking it. God's church is a cup of consolation to all her friends (Isa. 66:11), but a cup of trembling to all that would either debauch her by errors and corruptions or destroy her by wars and persecutions. See Isa. 51:22, 23.

(2.) *Jerusalem shall be a burdensome stone* to all that attempt to remove it or carry it away, v. 3. All *the people of the earth* are here supposed to be *gathered together against it*, some one time and some another; there has been a succession of enemies, from age to age, making war upon the church. But though they were all at once in a confederacy against it, and had formed a resolution to *cut off the name of Israel, that it should be no more in remembrance* (Ps. 83:4), they will find it a task too hard for them. Those that are for keeping up and advancing the kingdom of sin in the world look upon Jerusalem, even the church of God, as the great obstacle to their designs, and they must have it out of the way; but they will find it heavier than they think it is; so that, [1.] They cannot remove it. God will have a church in the world, in spite of them; it is *built upon a rock*, and is as *Mount Zion, that abides for ever*, Ps. 125:1. This *stone, cut out of the mountain without hands*, will not only keep its ground, but fill the earth, Dan. 2:35. Nay, [2.] It will *break in pieces all that burden themselves with it*, as that stone *smote the image*,

Dan. 2:45. All that think themselves a match for it shall be *cut in pieces* by it. Some think it is an allusion to a sport which Jerome, upon this place, says was in use among the Jews, as among us: young men tried their strength, and strove for mastery, by heaving up great stones, which, if they proved too heavy for them, fell upon them, and bruised them. Those that make a jest of religion, and banter sacred things, will find them a burdensome stone, that it is ill-jesting with edged-tools, and though they make light of it (saying, *Am not I in sport?*) they bring upon themselves an insupportable sinking load of guilt. Our Saviour seems to allude to these words when he speaks of himself as a burdensome stone to those that will not have him for their foundation-stone, which shall *fall upon them and grind them to powder*, Mt. 21:44.

(3.) The governors of Judah shall be among their enemies like *a hearth of fire among the wood, and a torch of fire in a sheaf*, v. 6. Not that their own passions shall make them incendiaries and firebrands to all about them; no; Zion's King is *meek and lowly*, and all subordinate governors must be like him; but God's justice will make them avengers of his cause, and theirs, upon their enemies. Those that contend with them will find it is like an opposition given by briars and thorns to a consuming fire, Isa. 27:4. It will go through them, and burn them together. It is God's wrath, and not theirs, that is the fire which devours the adversaries. God's fire is said to be *in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem*. Isa. 31:9. The enemies thought to be as water to this fire, to extinguish it and put it quite out; but God will make them as wood, nay, as a sheaf of corn (which is more combustible), to this fire, not only to be consumed by it, but to be made thereby to burn the more strongly. When God would make Abimelech and the men of Shechem one another's destroyers fire is said to *come out from the one to devour the other*, Jdg. 9:20. So here, Fire shall come out from the *governors of Judah to devour all the people round about*, as from the mouth of God's witnesses to consume those who offer to hurt them, Rev. 11:5. The persecutors of the primitive church found this fulfilled in it, witness Lactantius's history of God's judgments upon the primitive persecutors, and the confession of Julian the apostate at last. *Thou hast overcome me, O thou Galilean!* The church's motto may be, *Nemo me impune lacesset—He that assails me does it at his peril. If you are weary of your life, persecute the Christians*, was once a proverb.

2. It is promised that God will infatuate the counsels and enfeeble the courage of the church's enemies (v. 4): *"In that day, when the people of the earth are gathered together against Jerusalem, I will smite every horse with astonishment, and his rider with madness;"* and again, *"I will smite every horse of the people with blindness, so that they shall be no way serviceable to them; blinding the horses will be as bad as houghing them."* The horses and their horsemen shall both forget the military exercise to which they were trained, and, instead of keeping ranks and observing the rules of their discipline, they shall both grow mad, and ruin themselves. The church's infantry shall be too hard for the enemy's cavalry; and those who were upbraided with trusting in horses shall be baffled by those who were forbidden to multiply horses.

3. It is promised that Jerusalem shall be re-peopled and replenished (v. 6): *Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in Jerusalem*. The natives of Jerusalem shall not incorporate in a colony in some other country, and build a city there, and call that *Jerusalem*, and see the promises fulfilled in that, as those in New England called their towns by the names of towns in Old England. No; they shall have a new Jerusalem upon the same foundation, the same spot of ground, with the old one. They had so after their return out of captivity, but this was to have its full accomplishment in the gospel-church, which is

a Jerusalem inhabited *in its own place*; for, the gospel being to be preached to all the world, it may call every place its own.

4. It is promised that the inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be enabled to defend themselves, and yet shall be taken under the divine protection, v. 8. See here in what method God preserves his church, and those that are his, from the gates of hell to and through the gates of heaven. (1.) He does himself secure them: *In that day shall the Lord defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem*, not only Jerusalem itself from being taken and destroyed, but every inhabitant of it from being any way damaged. God will not only be a *wall of fire* about the city, to fortify that, but he will encompass particular persons with his favour *as with a shield*, so that no dart of the besiegers shall touch them. (2.) He does it by giving them strength and courage to help themselves. What God works in his people by his grace contributes more to their preservation and defence than what he works for them by his providence. *The God of Israel gives strength and power to his people*, that they may do their part, and then he will not be wanting to do his. it is the glory of God to strengthen the weak, that most need his help, that see and own their need of it, and will be the most thankful for it. [1.] In that day the feeblest of the inhabitants of Jerusalem *shall be as David*, shall be men of war, as bold and brave, as skilful and strong, as David himself, shall attempt and accomplish great things, as David did, and become as serviceable to Jerusalem in guarding it as David himself was in founding it, and as formidable as he was to the enemies of it. See what divine grace does; it makes children not only men, but champions, makes weak saints to be not only good soldiers, but great soldiers, like David. And see how God often does his own work as easily and effectually, and more to his own glory, by weak and obscure instruments than by the most illustrious. [2.] *The house of David shall be as God*, that is, *as the angel of the Lord, before them*. Zerubbabel was now the top-branch of the house of David; he shall be endued with wisdom and grace for the service to which he is called, and shall go before the people as an angel, as that angel (so some think) which went before the people of Israel through the wilderness, which was God himself, Ex. 23:20. God will increase the gifts and abilities both of the people and princes, in proportion to the respective services for which they are designed. It was said of David that he was *as an angel of God, to discern good and bad*, 2 Sa. 14:17. Such shall the house of David now be. The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be as strong and fit for action as nature made David, and their magistrates as wise and fit for counsel as grace made him. But this was to have its full accomplishment in Christ; now the house of David looked little and mean, and its glory was eclipsed, but in Christ the house of David shone more brightly than ever, and its countenance was as that of an angel; in him it became more blessed, and more a blessing, than ever it had been.

5. It is promised that there shall be a very good understanding between the city and the country, and that the balance shall be kept even between them; there shall be no mutual envies or jealousies between them; they shall not keep up any separate interests, but shall heartily unite in their counsels, and act in concert for the common good; and this happy agreement between the city and the country, the head and the body, is very necessary to the health, welfare, and safety of any nation. (1.) *The governors of Judah*, the magistrates and gentry of the country, shall think honourably of the citizens, *the inhabitants of Jerusalem*, the merchants and tradesmen; they shall not run them down, and contrive how to keep them under, but they *shall say in their hearts*, not in compliment but in sincerity, *The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be my strength*, the strength of my country, of my family, *in the Lord of hosts their God*, v. 5. They will therefore, upon all occasions, pay respect and deference

to Jerusalem, as the mother-city, the ruling-city, and the city that is to be first served, because they look upon it to be the bulwark of the nation and its strongest fortification in times of public danger and distress, which therefore they would all come in to the assistance of and come under the protection of, and this not so much because it was a rich city, and money is the sinews of war, nor because it was a populous city and could bring the greatest numbers into the field, nor because its inhabitants were generally the most ingenious active men, the best soldiers and the best commanders (*of Zion it shall be said, This and that brave man were born there*), but because it was a *holy city*, where God's house and household, the temple and the priests, were, where his worship was kept up and his feasts were observed, and because it should now be more than ever a praying city, for *upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem God will pour a spirit of supplication* (v. 10); therefore the governors of Judah shall say, *These are my strength*; they are so upon the account of their relation to, their interest in, and their communion with, *the Lord of hosts, their God*. Because *the Lord of hosts* is in a particular manner *their God* (for *in Salem is his tabernacle and his dwelling-place in Zion*), therefore *they shall be my strength*. Note, It is well with a kingdom when its great men know how to value its good men, when its governors look upon religion and religious people to be their strength, and consider it their interest to support them, and learn to call godly praying people, and skilful faithful ministers, *the chariots and horsemen of Israel*, as Joash called Elisha, and not the troublers of the land, as Ahab called Elijah. (2.) The court and the city shall not despise, nor look with contempt upon, the inhabitants of the country; no, not the meanest of them, much less upon the governors of Judah; for God will put signal honour upon Judah, and so save them from the contempt of their brethren. As Jerusalem was dignified by special ordinances, so Judah shall be dignified with special providences. God says (v. 4), *I will open my eyes upon the house of Judah*, upon the poor country people. Proud men scornfully overlook them, but the great God will graciously look upon them and look after them. Nay, (v. 7), *the Lord shall save the tents of Judah first*. Those that dwell in tents lie most exposed; but God will remarkably protect and deliver them before those that dwell in Jerusalem. He will appear glorious in what he does for the *inhabitants of his villages in Israel*, Jdg. 5:11. Thus, in the mystical body, God *gives more abundant honour to that part which lacked, that there may be no schism in the body* (see 1 Co. 12:22–25), which is the reason here given why *the glory of the house of David*, which has great power, and *the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem*, who have great wealth, and both which live in great pomp and pleasure, *may not magnify themselves against Judah* and the *tents of Judah*, the dwellers in which work hard, and fare hard, and perhaps are not so well bred. Note, Courtiers and citizens ought not to despise country people, nor look with disdain upon those whom God *opens his eyes upon* and who are *first saved*, while it is so hard for the rich and great to *enter the kingdom of God*. If God by his grace has magnified the dwellers in the tents of Judah, having chosen the weak and foolish things of the world and chosen to employ them, we affront him if we vilify them, or magnify ourselves against them, Jam. 2:5, 6. This promise has a further reference to the gospel-church, in which no difference shall be made between high and low, rich and poor, bond and free, circumcision and uncircumcision, but all shall be alike welcome to Christ, and partake of his benefits, Col. 3:11. Jerusalem shall not then be thought, as it had been, more holy than other parts of the land of Israel.

Verses 9-14

The *day* here spoken of is the day of Jerusalem's defence and deliverance, that glorious day when God will appear for the salvation of his people, which, if it do refer to the successes which the Jews had against their enemies in the time of the Maccabees, yet certainly looks further, to the *gospel-day*, to Christ's victories over the powers of darkness and the great salvation he has wrought for his chosen. Now we have here an account of two remarkable works designed *in that day*.

I. A glorious work of God to be wrought for his people: "*I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem*, v. 9. Nations come against Jerusalem, many and mighty nations; but they shall all be destroyed, their power shall be broken, and their attempts baffled; the mischief they intend shall return upon their own head." God will seek to destroy them, not as if he were at a loss for ways and means to bring it about (Infinite Wisdom was never nonplussed), but his seeking to do it intimates that he is very earnest and intent upon it (he is jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and has the *day of vengeance* in his heart) and that he overrules means and instruments, and all the motions and operations of second causes, in order to it. He is *framing evil* against them; when he seems to be setting them up he is seeking to destroy them. In Christ's first coming, he *sought to destroy him that had the power of death*, and did destroy him, bruised the serpent's head, and broke all the *powers of darkness* that fought against God's kingdom among men and against the faithful friends and subjects of that kingdom; he *spoiled* them, and *made a show of them openly*. In his second coming, he will complete their destruction, when he shall *put down all opposing rule, principality, and power*, and *death* itself shall be *swallowed up* in that victory. *The last enemy shall be destroyed* of all that *fought against Jerusalem*.

II. A gracious work of God to be wrought in his people, in order to the work that is to be wrought for them. When he seeks to destroy their enemies he will *pour upon them the Spirit of grace and supplication*. Note, When God intends great mercy for his people the first thing he does is to set them a praying; thus he seeks to destroy their enemies by stirring them up to seek to him that he would do it for them; because, though he has proposed it and promised it, and it is for his own glory to do it, yet he will *for this be enquired of by the house of Israel*, Eze. 36:37. *Ask, and it shall be given*. This honour will he have to himself, and this honour will he put upon prayer and upon praying people. And it is a happy presage to the distressed church of deliverance approaching, and is, as it were, the dawning of its day, when his people are stirred up to cry mightily to him for it. But this promise has reference to, and is performed in, the graces of the Spirit given to all believers, as that Isa. 44:3, *I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed*, which was fulfilled when *Jesus was glorified*, Jn. 7:39. It is a promise of the Spirit, and with him of all *spiritual blessings in heavenly things by Christ*. Now observe here,

1. On whom these blessings are poured out. (1.) *On the house of David*, on the great men; for they are no more, and no better, than the grace of God makes them. It was promised (v. 8) that *the house of David* should be *as the angel of the Lord*. Now, in order to that, the Spirit of grace is poured upon them; for the more the saints have of the Spirit of grace the more like they are to the holy angels. When God was about to appear for the land, he poured his Spirit of grace upon the house of David, the leading men of the land. It bodes well to a people when princes and great men go before the rest in that which is good, as 2 Chr. 20:5. The house of David is all summed up in Jesus Christ, *the Son of David*; and upon him, as the head, the Spirit of grace is poured out, from him to be diffused to all his members; *from his fulness we receive, and grace for grace*. (2.) *On the*

inhabitants of Jerusalem, the common people; for the operations of the Spirit are the same upon the mean and weak Christians that they are upon the strong and more grown. The inhabitants of Jerusalem cannot influence public affairs by their powers and policies, as the great men of the house of David may, yet they may do good service by their prayers, and therefore upon them the Spirit shall be poured out. The church is Jerusalem, the heavenly Jerusalem; all true believers, that have their conversation in the heaven, are inhabitants of this Jerusalem, and to them this promise belongs. God will *pour his Spirit upon them*. This is the earnest which all that *believe in Christ shall receive*; thus they are sanctified; thus they are sealed.

2. What these blessings are: *I will pour upon them the Spirit*. That includes all good things, as it qualifies us for the favour of God, and all his other gifts. He will pour out the Spirit, (1.) As a *Spirit of grace*, to sanctify us and to make us gracious. (2.) As a *Spirit of supplications*, inclining us to, instructing and assisting us in, the duty of prayer. Note, Wherever the Spirit is given as a Spirit of grace, he is given as a Spirit of sanctification. Wherever he is a Spirit of adoption, he *teaches to cry, Abba, Father*. As soon as ever Paul was converted, *Behold, he prays*, Acts 9:11. You may as soon find a living man without breath as a living saint without prayer. There is a more plentiful effusion of the Spirit of prayer now under the gospel than was under the law; and the further the work of sanctification is carried in us the better is the work of supplication carried on by us.

3. What the effect of them will be: *I will pour upon them the Spirit of grace*. One would think that it should follow, "And they shall look on him whom they have believed, and shall rejoice" (and it is true that that is one of the fruits of the pouring out of the Spirit, whence we read of *the joy of the Holy ghost*), but it follows, *They shall mourn*; for there is a holy mourning, that is the effect of the pouring out of the Spirit, a mourning for sin, which is of use to quicken faith in Christ and qualify for joy in God. It is here made the matter of a promise that they shall mourn, for there is a mourning that will end in rejoicing and has a blessing entailed upon it. This mourning is a fruit of the Spirit of grace, an evidence of a work of grace in the soul, and a companion of the Spirit of supplication, as it expresses lively affections working in prayer; hence prayers and tears are often put together, 2 Ki. 20:5. Jacob, that wrestler with God, *wept and made supplication*. But here it is a mourning for sin that is the effect of the pouring out of the Spirit.

(1.) It is a mourning grounded upon a sight of Christ: *They shall look on me whom they have pierced, and shall mourn for him*. Here, [1.] It is foretold that Christ should be pierced, and this scripture is quoted as that which was fulfilled when Christ's side was pierced upon the cross; see Jn. 19:37. [2.] He is spoken of as one whom we have pierced; it is spoken primarily of the Jews, who persecuted him to death (and we find that *those who pierced him* are distinguished from the other *kindreds of the earth* that shall *wail because of him*, Rev. 1:7); yet it is true of us all as sinners, we have pierced Christ, inasmuch as our sins were the cause of his death, for he was *wounded for our transgressions*, and they are the *grief of his soul*; he is *broken with the whorish heart* of sinners, who *therefore* are said to *crucify him afresh* and put him to open shame. [3.] Those that truly repent of sin look upon Christ as one whom they have pierced, who was pierced for their sins and is pierced by them; and this engages them to *look unto him*, as those that are deeply concerned for him. [4.] This is the effect of their looking to Christ; it makes them mourn. This was particularly fulfilled in those to whom Peter preached Christ crucified; when they heard it those who had had a hand in piercing him were *pricked to the heart*, and cried out, *What shall we do?* It is fulfilled in all those who

sorrow for sin after a godly sort; they look to Christ, and *mourn for him*, not so much for his sufferings as for their own sins that procured them. Note, The genuine sorrows of a penitent soul flow from the believing sight of a pierced Saviour. Looking by faith upon the cross of Christ will set us a mourning for sin after a godly sort.

(2.) It is a great mourning. [1.] it is like the mourning of a parent for the death of a beloved child. They shall mourn for sin *as one mourns for an only son*, in whose grave the hopes of his family are buried, and shall be inwardly *in bitterness as one that is in bitterness for his first-born*, as the Egyptians were when there was a cry throughout all their land for the death of their first-born. The sorrow of children for the death of their parents is sometimes counterfeited, is often small, and soon wears off and is forgotten; but the sorrow of parents for a child, for a son, for an only son, for a first-born, is natural, sincere, unforced, and unaffected, it is secret and lasting; such are the sorrows of a true penitent, flowing purely from love to Christ above any other. [2.] It is like the mourning of a people for the death of a wise and good prince. It shall be *like the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon*, where good king Josiah was slain, for whom there was a general lamentation (v. 11), and perhaps the greater because they were told that it was their sin that provoked God to deprive them of so great a blessing; therefore they cried out, *The crown has fallen from our head. Woe unto us, for we have sinned!* Lam. 5:16. Christ is our King; our sins were his death, and, for that reason, ought to be our grief.

(3.) It is a general universal mourning (v. 12): *The land shall mourn*. The land itself put on mourning at the death of Christ, for there was then *darkness over all the land*, and the earth trembled; but this is a promise that, in consideration of the death of Christ, multitudes shall be effectually brought to sorrow for sin and turn to God; it shall be such a universal gracious mourning as was when *all the house of Israel lamented after the Lord*, 1 Sa. 7:2. Some think this is yet to have its complete accomplishment in the general conversion of the Jewish nation.

(4.) It is also a private particular mourning. There shall be not only a mourning of *the land*, by its representatives in a general assembly (as Jdg. 2:5, when the place was called *Bochim—A place of weepers*), but it shall spread itself into all corners of the land: *Every family apart shall mourn* (v. 12), *all the families that remain*, v. 14. All have contributed to the guilt, and therefore all shall share in the grief. Note, The exercises of devotion should be performed by private families among themselves, besides their joining in public assemblies for religious worship. National fasts must be observed, not only in our synagogues, but in our houses. In the mourning here foretold the wives mourn apart by themselves, in their own apartment, as Esther and her maids. And some think it intimates their denying themselves the use even of lawful delights in a time of general humiliation 1 Co. 7:5. Four several families are here specified as examples to others in this mourning:—[1.] Two of them are royal families: the *house of David*, in Solomon, and the *house of Nathan*, another son of David, brother to Solomon, from whom Zerubbabel descended, as appears by Christ's genealogy, Lu. 3:27–31. The house of David, particularly that of Nathan, which is now the chief branch of that house, shall go before in this good work. The greatest princes must not think themselves exempted from the law of repentance, but rather obliged most solemnly to express it, for the exciting of others, as Hezekiah humbled himself (2 Chr. 32:26), the princes and the king (2 Chr. 12:6), and the king of Nineveh, Jonah 3:6. [2.] Two of them are sacred families (v. 13), *the family of the house of Levi*, which was God's tribe, and in it particularly the family of Shimei, which was a branch

of the tribe of Levi (1 Chr. 6:17), and probably some of the descendants of that family were now of note for preachers to the people or ministers to the altar. As the princes must mourn for the sins of the magistracy, so must the priests for the *iniquity of the holy things*. In times of general tribulation and humiliation the Lord's ministers are concerned to *weep between the porch and the altar* (Joel 2:17), and not only there, but in their houses apart; for in what families should godliness, both in the form and in the power of it, be found, if not in ministers' families?

Chapter 13

In this chapter we have, I. Some further promises relating to gospel-times. Here is a promise of the remission of sins (v. 1), of the reformation of manners (v. 2), and particularly of the convicting and silencing of false prophets (v. 2-6). II. A clear prediction of the sufferings of Christ and the dispersion of his disciples thereupon (v. 7), of the destruction of the greater part of the Jewish nation not long after (v. 8), and of the purifying of a remnant of them, a peculiar people to God (v. 9).

Verses 1-6

Behold the Lamb of God *taking away the sin of the world*, the sin of the church; for *therefore* was the Son of God manifested, to *take away our sin*, 1 Jn. 3:5.

I. He takes away the guilt of sin by the blood of his cross (v. 1): *In that day*, in the gospel-day, *there shall be a fountain opened*, that is, provision made for the cleansing of all those from the pollutions of sin who truly repent and are sorry for them. *In that day*, when the Spirit of grace is poured out to set them a mourning for their sins, they shall not mourn as those who have no hope, but they shall have their sins pardoned, and the comfort of their pardon in their bosoms. Their consciences shall be purified and pacified by the *blood of Christ, which cleanses from all sin*, 1 Jn. 1:7. For Christ is exalted to give both repentance and remission of sins; and where he gives the one no doubt he gives the other. This *fountain opened* is the pierced side of Jesus Christ, spoken of just before (ch. 12:10), for thence came there out *blood and water*, and both for cleansing. And those who *look upon Christ pierced*, and mourn for their sins that pierced him, and are therefore in bitterness for him, may look again upon Christ pierced and rejoice in him, because it pleased the Lord thus to smite this rock, that it might be to us a *fountain of living waters*. See here, 1. How we are polluted; we are all so; we have sinned, and sin is uncleanness; it defiles the mind and conscience, renders us odious to God and uneasy in ourselves, unfit to be employed in the service of God and admitted into communion with him, as those who were ceremonially unclean were shut out of the sanctuary. The *house of David* and the *inhabitants of Jerusalem* are under *sin*, which is uncleanness. The truth is, we are all *as an unclean thing*, and deserve to have our portion with the unclean. 2. How we may be purged. Behold, there is fountain opened for us to wash in, and there are streams flowing to us from that fountain, so that, if we be not made clean, it is our own fault. The blood of Christ, and God's pardoning mercy in that blood, revealed in the new covenant, are, (1.) A fountain; for there is in them an inexhaustible fulness. There is mercy enough in God, and merit enough in Christ, for the forgiving of the greatest sins and sinners, upon gospel-terms. *Such were some of you, but you are washed*, 1 Co. 6:11. Under the law there were a brazen laver and a brazen sea to wash in; those were but vessels, but we have a fountain to ourselves, overflowing, ever-flowing. (2.) *A fountain opened*; for, whoever will, may come and take the benefit of it; it is opened, not only to *the house of David*, but to *the inhabitants of Jerusalem*, to the poor and mean as well as to the rich and great; or it is opened for all believers, who, as the spiritual seed of Christ, are of the house of David, and, as living members of the church, are inhabitants of Jerusalem. Through Christ all that believe are justified, are *washed from their sins in his blood*, that they may be *made to our God kings and priests*, Rev. 1:5, 6. II. He takes away the dominion of sin by the power of his grace, even of beloved sins. This evermore accompanies the former;

those that are washed in the fountain opened, as they are justified, so they are sanctified; the water came with the blood out of the pierced side of Christ. It is here promised that in that day, 1. Idolatry shall be quite abolished and the people of the Jews shall be effectually cured of their inclination to it (v. 2): *I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land*. The worship of the idols of their fathers shall be so perfectly rooted out that in one generation or two it shall be forgotten that ever there were such idols among them; they shall either not be named at all or not with any respect; *they shall no more be remembered*, as was promised, Hos. 2:17. This was fulfilled in the rooted aversion which the Jews had, after the captivity, to idols and idolatry, and still retain to this day; it was fulfilled also in the ready conversion of many to the faith of Christ, by which they were taken off from making an idol of the ceremonial law, as the unbelieving Jews did; and it is still in the fulfilling when souls are brought off from the world and the flesh, those two great idols, that they may cleave to God only. 2. False prophecy shall also be brought to an end: *I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit*, the prophets that are under the influence of the unclean spirit, to *pass out of the land*. The devil is an *unclean spirit*; sin and uncleanness are from him; he has his prophets, that serve his interests and receive their instructions from him. Take away the unclean spirit, and the prophets would not deceive as they do; take away the false prophets that produce sham commissions, and the unclean spirit could not do the mischief he does. When God designs the silencing of the false prophets he banishes the unclean spirit out of the land, that wrought in them, and was a rival with him for the throne in the heart. The church of the Jews, when they were addicted to idols, did also dote much upon false prophets, who flattered them in their sins with promises of impunity and peace; but here it is promised, as a blessed effect of the promised reformation, that they should be very much set against false prophets, and zealous to clear the land of them; they were so after the captivity, till, through the blindness of their zeal against false prophets, they had put Christ to death under that character, and, after that, there arose many *false Christs and false prophets, and deceived many*, Mt. 24:11. It is here foretold, (1.) That false prophets, instead of being indulged and favoured, should be brought to condign punishment even by their nearest relations, which would be as great an instance as any of flagrant zeal against those deceivers (v. 3): *When any shall set up for a prophet, and shall speak lies in the name of the Lord, shall preach that which tends to draw people from God and to confirm them in sin, his own parents shall be the first and most forward to prosecute him for it, according to the law*. Deu. 13:6–11, *"If thy son entice thee secretly from God, thou shalt surely kill him*. Show thy indignation against him, and prevent any further temptation from him." *His father and his mother shall thrust him through when he prophesies*. Note, We ought to conceive, and always to retain, a very great detestation and dread of every thing that would draw us out of the way of our duty into by-paths, as those who cannot *bear that which is evil*, Rev. 2:2. And holy zeal for God and godliness will make us hate sin, and dread temptation, most in those whom naturally we love best, and who are nearest to us; there our danger is greatest, as Adam's from Eve, Job's from his wife; and there it will be the most praiseworthy to show our zeal, as Levi, who, in the cause of God, did not *acknowledge his brethren, nor know his own children*, Deu. 33:9. Thus we must hate and forsake our nearest relations when they come in competition with our duty to God, Lu. 14:26. Natural affections, even the strongest, must be over-ruled by gracious affections. (2.) That false prophets should be themselves convinced of their sin and folly, and let fall their pretensions (v. 4): *"The prophets shall be ashamed every one of his vision; they shall not repeat it, or insist upon it, but*

desire that it may be forgotten and no more said of it, being ready themselves to own it was a sham, because God has by his grace awakened their consciences and shown them their error, or because the event disproves their predictions, and gives them the lie, or because their prophecies do not meet with such a favourable reception as they used to meet with, but are generally despised and distasted; they perceive the people ashamed of them, which makes them begin to be ashamed of themselves. And therefore they shall no longer *wear a rough garment, or garment of hair*, as the true prophets used to do, in imitation of Elijah, and in token of their being mortified to the pleasures and delights of sense." The pretenders had appeared in the habit of true prophets; but, their folly being now made manifest, they shall lay it aside, no more to deceive and impose upon unthinking unwary people by it. A modest dress is a very good thing, if it be the genuine indication of a humble heart, and is to instruct; but it is a bad thing if it be the hypocritical disguise of a proud ambitious heart, and is to deceive. Let men be really as good as they seem to be, but not seem to be better than really they are. This pretender, as a true penitent, [1.] Shall undeceive those whom he had imposed upon: *He shall say, "I am no prophet*, as I have pretended to be, was never designed nor set apart to the office, never educated nor brought up for it, never conversant among the sons of the prophets. *I am a husbandman*, and was bred to that business; I was never taught of God to prophesy, but *taught of man to keep cattle"* Amos was originally such a one too, and yet was afterwards called to be a prophet, Amos 7:14, 15. But this deceiver never had any such call. Note, Those who sorrow after a godly sort for their having deceived others will be forward to confess their sin, and will be so just as to rectify the mistakes which they have been the cause of. Thus those who had *used curious arts*, when they were converted *showed their deeds*, and by what fallacies they had cheated the people, Acts 19:18. [2.] He shall return to his own proper employment, which is the fittest for him: *I will be a husbandman* (so it may be read); "I will apply myself to my calling again, and meddle no more with things that belong not to me; for *man taught me to keep cattle from my youth*, and cattle I will again keep, and never set up for a preacher any more." Note, When we are convinced that we have gone out of the way of our duty we must evince the truth of our repentance by returning to it again, though it be the severest mortification to us. [3.] He shall acknowledge those to be his friends who by a severe discipline were instrumental to bring him to a sight of his error, v. 6. When he who with the greatest assurance had asserted himself so lately to be a prophet suddenly drops his claims, and says, I am no prophet, every body will be surprised at it, and some will ask, "*What are these wounds, or marks of stripes, in thy hands?* how camest thou by them? Hast thou not been *examined by scourging?* And is not that it that has brought thee to thyself?" (*Vexatio dat intellectum—Vexation sharpens the intellect.*) "Hast thou not been beaten into this acknowledgment? Was it not the rod and reproof that gave thee this wisdom?" And he shall own, "Yes, it was; these are the *wounds with which I was wounded in the house of my friends*, who bound me, and used me hardly and severely, as a distracted man, and so brought me to my senses." By this it appears that those parents of the false prophet that *thrust him through* (v. 3) did not do it till they had first tried to reclaim him by correction, and he would not be reclaimed; for so was the law concerning a disobedient son—his parents must first have chastened him in vain before they were allowed to bring him forth to be stoned, Deu. 21:18, 19. But here is another who was reduced by stripes, and so prevented the capital punishment; and he had the sense and honesty to own that they were his friends, his real friends, who thus wounded him, that they might reclaim him; for *faithful are the wounds of a*

friend, Prov. 27:6. Some good interpreters, observing how soon this comes after the mention of Christ's being pierced, think that these are the words of that great prophet, not of the false prophet spoken of before. Christ was wounded in his hands, when they were nailed to the cross, and, after his resurrection, he had the marks of these wounds; and here he tells how he came by them; he received them as a false prophet, for the chief priests called him a deceiver, and upon that account would have him crucified; but he received them in the house of his friends—the Jews, who should have been his friends; for *he came to his own*, and, though they were his bitter enemies, yet he was pleased to call them his *friends*, as he did Judas (*Friend, wherefore hast thou come?*) because they forwarded his sufferings for him; as he called Peter *Satan—an adversary*, because he dissuaded him from them.

Verses 7-9

Here is a prophecy,

I. Of the sufferings of Christ, of him who was to be pierced, and was to be the fountain opened. *Awake, O sword! against my Shepherd*, v. 7. These are the words of God the Father, giving order and commission to the sword of his justice to awake against his Son, when he had voluntarily made his soul an offering for sin; for *it pleased the Lord to bruise him and put him to grief*; and *he was stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted*, Isa. 53:4, 10. Observe, 1. How he calls him. "As God, he is *my fellow*;" for he thought it *no robbery to be equal with God*. He and *the Father* are *one*. He was from eternity by him, as one brought up with him, and, in the work of man's redemption, he was his elect, in whom his soul delighted, and the counsel of peace was between them both. "As Mediator, he is *my Shepherd*, that great and good Shepherd that undertook to feed the flock," ch. 11:7. He is the Shepherd that was to lay down his life for the sheep. 2. How he uses him: *Awake, O sword! against him*. If he will be a sacrifice, he must be slain, for without the shedding of blood, the life-blood, there was no remission. men thrust him through as the good Shepherd (compare v. 3), that he might *purchase the flock of God with his own blood*, Acts 20:28. It is not a charge given to a rod to correct him, but to a sword to slay him; for *Messiah the prince must be cut off, but not for himself*, Dan. 9:26. It is not the sword of war that receives this charge, that he may die in the bed of honour, but the sword of justice, that he may die as a criminal, upon an ignominious tree. This sword must awake against him; he having no sin of his own to answer for, the sword of justice had nothing to say to him of itself, till, by particular order from the Judge of all, it was warranted to brandish itself against him. he was the Lamb *slain from the foundation of the world*, in the decree and counsel of God; but the sword designed against him had long slumbered, till now at length it is called upon to awake, not, "Awake, and smite him; strike home; not with a drowsy blow, but an awakened one;" for God *spared not his own Son*.

II. Of the dispersion of the disciples thereupon: *Smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered*. This our Lord Jesus himself declares to have been fulfilled when *all his disciples were offended because of him* in the night wherein he was betrayed, Mt. 26:31; Mk. 14:27. They all *forsook him and fled*. The smiting of the Shepherd is the scattering of the sheep. They were *scattered every one to his own, and left him alone*, Jn. 16:32. Herein they were like timorous sheep; yet the Shepherd thus provided for their safety, for he said, *If you seek me, let these go their way*. Some make another application of this; Christ was the *Shepherd* of the Jewish nation; he was smitten; they themselves smote him, and therefore they were justly scattered abroad,

and dispersed among the nations, and remain so at this day. These words, *I will turn my hand upon the little ones*, may be understood either as a threatening (as Christ suffered, so shall his disciples, they shall *drink of the cup that he drank of* and be *baptized with the baptism that he was baptized with*) or as a promise that God would gather Christ's scattered disciples together again, and he should give them the meeting in Galilee. Though the little ones among Christ's soldiers may be dispersed, they shall rally again; the lambs of his flock, though frightened by the beasts of prey, shall recover themselves, shall be gathered in his arms and laid in his bosom. Sometimes, when the sheep are scattered and lost in the wilderness, yet the little ones, which, it was feared, would be a prey (Num. 14:31), are brought in, are brought home, and God turns his hand upon them.

III. Of the rejection and ruin of the unbelieving Jews (v. 8); and this word has, and shall have, its accomplishment, in the destruction of the corrupt and hypocritical part of the church. *It shall come to pass that in all the land of Israel two parts shall be cut off and die*. The Roman army laid the country waste, and slew at least two-thirds of the Jews. Some understand by the *cutting off*, and *dying*, or *two parts* in *all the earth*, the abolishing of heathenism and Judaism, that Christianity, the third part, might be left to reign alone. The Jewish worship was quite taken away by the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. And, some time after, Pagan idolatry was in a manner extirpated, when the empire became Christian.

IV. Of the reformation and preservation of the chosen remnant, those of them that believed, and the Christian church in general (v. 9): *The third part shall be left*. When Jerusalem and Judea were destroyed, all the Christians in that country, having among them the warning Christ gave them to *flee to the mountains*, shifted for their own safety, and were sheltered in a city called *Pella*, on the other side Jordan. We have here first the trials and then the triumphs of the Christian church, and of all the faithful members of it. 1. Their trials: *I will bring that third part through the fire* of affliction. *and will refine and try them as silver and gold are refined and tried*. This was fulfilled in the persecutions of the primitive church, the *fiery trial* which tried the people of God then, 1 Pt. 4:12. Those whom God sets apart for himself must pass through a probation and purification in this world; they must be *tried* that *their faith* may be *found to praise and honour* (1 Pt. 1:6, 7), as Abraham's faith was when it was tried by the command given him to offer up Isaac, *Now know I that thou fearest me*. They must be tried, that both those that are perfect and those that are not may be *made manifest*. They must be refined from their dross; their corruption must be purged out; they must be brightened and bettered. 2. Their triumphs. (1.) Their communion with God is their triumph: *They shall call on my name, and I will hear them*. They write to God by prayer, and receive from him answers of peace, and thus keep up a comfortable communion with him. *This honour have all his saints*. (2.) Their covenant with God is their triumph: *"I will say, It is my people, whom I have chosen and loved, and will own; and they shall say, the Lord is my God, and a God all-sufficient to me; and in me they shall boast every day and all the day long. This God is our God for ever and ever."*

Chapter 14

Divers things were foretold, in the two foregoing chapters, which should come to pass "in that day;" this chapter speaks of a "day of the Lord that cometh," a day of his judgment, and ten times in the foregoing chapters, and seven times in this, it is repeated, "in that day;" but what that day is that is here meant is uncertain, and perhaps will be so (as the Jews speak) till Elias comes; whether it refer to the whole period of time from the prophet's days to the days of the Messiah, or to some particular events in that time, or to Christ's coming, and the setting up of his kingdom upon the ruins of the Jewish polity, we cannot determine, but divers passages here seem to look as far forward as gospel-times. Now the "day of the Lord" brings with it both judgment and mercy, mercy to his church, judgment to her enemies and persecutors. I. The gates of hell are here threatening the church (v. 1, 2) and yet not prevailing. II. The power of Heaven appears here for the church and against the enemies of it (v. 3, 5). III. The events concerning the church are here represented as mixed (v. 6, 7), but issuing well at last. IV. The spreading of the means of knowledge is here foretold, and the setting up of the gospel-kingdom in the world (v. 8, 9), which shall be the enlargement and establishment of another Jerusalem (v. 10, 11). V. Those shall be reckoned with that fought against Jerusalem (v. 12–15) and those that neglect his worship there (v. 17–19). VI. It is promised that there shall be great resort to the church, and great purity and piety in it (v. 16, 20, 21).

Verses 1-7

God's providences concerning his church are here represented as strangely changing and strangely mixed.

I. As strangely changing. Sometimes the tide runs high and strong against them, but presently it turns, and comes to be in favour of them; and God has, for wise and holy ends, set the one over against the other.

1. God here appears against Jerusalem; judgment begins at the house of God. When the *day of the Lord comes* (v. 1) Jerusalem must pass through the fire to be refined. God himself *gathers all nations against Jerusalem to battle* (v. 2); he gives them a charge, as he did Sennacherib, to *take the spoil* and to *take the prey* (Isa. 10:6), for the people of Jerusalem have now become the *people of his wrath*. And who can stand before him or before nations gathered by him? Where he gives commission he will give success. The *city shall be taken by the Romans*, who have *nations* at command; the houses shall be rifled, and all the riches of them taken away, by the enemy; and, to gratify an insatiable lust of uncleanness as well as avarice, *the women shall be ravished*, as if victory were a license to the worst of villanies, *jusque datum sceleri—and crimes were sanctioned by law*. *One-half of the city shall then be carried into captivity*, to be sold or enslaved, and shall not be able to help itself, such is the destruction that shall be made in the great and terrible *day of the Lord*.

2. He presently changes his way, and appears for Jerusalem; for, though judgment begin at the house of God, yet, as it shall not end there, so it shall not make a full end there, Jer. 4:27; 30:11.

(1.) A remnant shall be spared, the same with that *third part* spoken of, ch. 13:8. *One-half shall go into captivity*, whence they may hereafter be fetched back, *and the residue of the people shall not be cut off*, as one would have feared, *from the city*. Many of the Jews shall receive the gospel, and so shall prevent their being cut off from the city of God, his church upon earth. *In it*

shall be a tenth, Isa. 6:13; See Eze. 5:3.

(2.) Their cause shall be pleaded against their enemies (v. 3): *Then*, when God has made use of these nations as a scourge to his people, he shall *go forth* and *fight against them* by his judgments, *as when he fought* against the enemies of his church formerly *in the day of battle*, with the Egyptians, Canaanites, and others. Note, The instruments of God's wrath will themselves be made the objects of it; for it will come to their turn to drink of the cup of trembling; and whom God fights against he will be sure to overcome and be too hard for. And every former *day of battle*, which God has made to his people a *day of triumph*, as it is an engagement to God to appear for his people, because he is the same, so it is an encouragement to them to trust in him. It is observable that the Roman empire never flourished, after the destruction of Jerusalem as it had done before, but in many instances God fought against it.

(3.) Though Jerusalem and the temple be destroyed, yet God will have a church in the world, into which Gentiles shall be admitted, and with whom the believing Jews shall be incorporated, v. 4, 5. These verses are dark and hard to be understood; but divers good expositors take this to be the meaning of them. [1.] God will carefully inspect Jerusalem, even then when the enemies of it are laying it waste: *His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives*, whence he may take a full view of the city and temple, Mk. 13:3. When the refiner puts his gold into the furnace he stands by it, and has his eye upon it, to see that it receive no damage; so when Jerusalem, God's gold, is to be refined, he will have the oversight of it. He will stand by *upon the mount of Olives*; this was literally fulfilled when our Lord Jesus was often upon this mountain, especially when thence he *ascended up into heaven*, Acts 1:12. It was the last place on which his feet stood on this earth, the place from which he took rise. [2.] The partition-wall between Jews and Gentiles shall be taken away. The *mountains about Jerusalem*, and particularly this, signified it to be an enclosure, and that it stood in the way of those who would approach to it. Between the Gentiles and Jerusalem this *mountain of Bether*, of *division*, stood, Cant. 2:17. But by the destruction of Jerusalem this mountain shall be made to *cleave in the midst*, and so the Jewish pale shall be taken down, and the church laid in common with the Gentiles, who were made one with the Jews by the breaking down of this *middle wall of partition*, Eph. 2:14. *Who art thou, O great mountain?* And a great mountain the ceremonial law was in the way of the Jews' conversion, which, one would think, could never have been got over; yet before Christ and his gospel it was made plain. This *mountain departs*, this *hill removes*, but the *covenant of peace* cannot be *broken*; for peace is still *preached to him that is afar off and to those that are nigh*. [3.] A new and living way shall be opened to the new Jerusalem, both to see it and to come into it. The mountain being divided, one-half *towards the north* and the other half *towards the south*, there shall be *a very great valley*, that is, a broad way of communication opened between Jerusalem and the Gentile world, by which the Gentiles shall have free admission into the gospel-Jerusalem, and the word of the Lord, that *goes forth from Jerusalem*, shall have a *free course* into the Gentile world. Thus the *way of the Lord* is prepared, for *every mountain and hill shall be brought low*, and plain and pleasant valleys shall come in the room of them, Isa. 40:4. [4.] Those of the Jews that believe shall come in, and join themselves to the Gentiles, and incorporate with them in the gospel-church: *You shall flee to the valley of the mountains*, that valley that is opened between the divided halves of the mount of Olives; they shall hasten into the church with the Gentiles, as formerly the Gentiles with them,

ch. 8:23. The *valley of the mountains* is the gospel-church, to which there were added of the Jews daily *such as should be saved*, who fled to that valley as to their refuge. This *valley of the mountains* is said to *reach unto Azal*, or to *the separate place*, that is, to all those whom God has *set apart for himself*. When God *makes his mountains a way* (Isa. 49:11), by making them a valley, the way shall be opened to all the *way-faring men* (Isa. 35:8), and, *though fools, they shall not err therein*. Or, to those that are now separated from God this valley shall reach; for the Gentiles, who are afar off, shall be made nigh, with the Jews, who are a *people near unto him*, and both have *an access*, a mutual access to each other and a joint access to God as a Father by one Spirit, Eph. 2:18. [5.] They shall flee to *the valley of the mountains*, to the gospel-church, under dreadful apprehensions of their danger from the curse of the law. They shall *flee from the wrath to come*, from the avenger of blood, who is in pursuit of them, to the church as to a *city of refuge*, or *as doves to their windows*, as they *fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah*, Amos 1:1. Therefore the gospel reveals the wrath of God from heaven (Rom. 1:18) that we might be awakened to *escape for our lives*, to flee as from an earthquake, for we feel the earth ready to sink under us, and we can find no firm footing in it, and therefore must flee to Christ, in whom alone we can stand fast and be easy.

(4.) God shall appear in his glory for the accomplishing of all this: *The Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee*, which may refer to his coming to destroy Jerusalem, or to destroy the enemies of Jerusalem, or his coming to set up his kingdom in the world, which is called the *coming of the Son of man* (Mt. 24:37), or to his last coming, at the end of time; however, it teaches us, [1.] That the Lord will come; it has been the faith of all the saints, *Behold, the Lord comes* to fulfil every word that he has spoken in its season. [2.] When he comes all his saints come with him; they attend his motions and are ready to serve his interests. Christ will come at the end of time with *ten thousands of his saints*, as when he came to give the law upon Mount Sinai. [3.] Every particular believer, being related to God as his God, may triumph in the expectation of his coming and speak of it with pleasure, *The Lord my God shall come*, shall come to the comfort of all that are his; for, "Blessed Lord, *all the saints shall be with thee*, and it shall be their everlasting happiness to dwell in thy presence; and therefore *come, Lord Jesus*." And some think that this may be read as a prayer, *Yet, O Lord my God! come, and bring all the saints with thee*.

II. God's providences appear here strangely mixed (v. 6, 7): *In that day of the Lord the light shall not be clear nor dark, not day nor night; but at evening time it shall be light*. Some refer this to all the time from hence to the coming of the Messiah; the Jewish church had neither perfect peace nor constant trouble, but a cloudy day, neither rain nor sunshine. But it may be taken more generally, as designed to represent the method God usually takes in the administration of the kingdom both of providence and grace. Here is, 1. An idea of the usual course and tenour of God's dispensations; the day of his grace and the day of his providence are *neither clear nor dark, not day nor night*. It is so with the church of God in this world; where the Sun of righteousness has risen it cannot be dark night, and yet short of heaven it will not be clear day. It is so with particular saints; they are not darkness, but *light in the Lord*, and yet, while there is so much error and corruption remaining in them, it is not perfect day. So it is as to the providences of God that relate to his church; in general the affairs of the church are neither good nor bad in any extremity, but there is a mixture of both; we are singing both of mercy and judgment, and are uncertain which will prevail, whether it be an evening or a morning twilight. We are between hope and fear, not knowing what to make of

things. 2. An intimation of comfort with reference hereunto: *It shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord.* This intimates, (1.) The beauty and harmony of such mixed events; there is one and the same design and tendency in all; all the wheels make but one wheel, all the revolutions but one day. (2.) The brevity of them; it is, as it were, but for one day, for a little moment; the cloud that darkens the light will soon blow over. (3.) The eye God has upon all these events, and the hand he has in them all; they are *known to the Lord*; he takes notice of them, and orders and disposes of all for the best, according to the counsel of his will. 3. An issue very joyful secured at last: *At evening-time it shall be light*: it shall be clear light, and no longer dark; we are sure of it in the other world, and we hope for it in this world—at *evening-time*, when our hopes are quite spent with waiting all day to no purpose, nay, when we fear it will be quite dark, when things are at the worst and the case of the church is most deplorable. As to the church's enemies *the sun goes down at noon*, so to the church it rises at night; unto the upright springs *light out of darkness* (Ps. 112:4); deliverance comes when the tale of bricks is doubled, and when God's people have done looking for it, and so it comes with a pleasing surprise.

Verses 8-15

Here are, I. Blessings promised to Jerusalem, the gospel-Jerusalem, in the day of the Messiah, and to all the earth, by virtue of the blessings poured out on Jerusalem, especially to the land of Israel.

1. Jerusalem shall be a spring of living waters to the world; it was made so when there the Spirit was poured out upon the apostles, and thence the word of the Lord diffused itself to the nations about (v. 8): *Living waters shall go out from Jerusalem*; for there they began, and thence those set out who were to preach *repentance* and *remission of sins unto all nations*, Lu. 24:47. Note, Where the gospel goes, and the graces of God's Spirit go along with it, there living waters go; those streams that *make glad the city of our God* make glad the country also, and make it like paradise, like the *garden of the Lord*, which was *well watered*. It was the honour of Jerusalem that *thence the word of the Lord went forth* (Isa. 2:3); and thus far, even in its worst and most degenerate age, for old acquaintance-sake, it was made a blessing, and to be so is to be blessed. Half of these waters shall go *towards the former sea* and *half towards the hinder sea*, as all rivers bend their course towards some sea or other, some eastward, others westward. The gospel shall spread into all parts of the world, into some that lie remote from Jerusalem one way and others that lie as far off another way; for the dominion of the Redeemer, which was thereby to be set up, must be *from sea to sea* (Ps. 72:8), and the earth must be *full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea*, and as the waters that in various channels run to the sea. The knowledge of God shall diffuse itself, (1.) Every way. These living waters shall produce both eastern churches and western churches, that shall each of them in its turn be illustrious. (2.) Every day: *In summer and in winter it shall be*. Note, Those who are employed in spreading the gospel may find themselves work both *winter* and *summer*, and are to serve the Lord therein at all seasons, Acts 20:18. And such a divine power goes along with these living waters that they shall not be dried up, nor the course of them be obstructed, either by the droughts in summer or by the frosts in winter.

2. The kingdom of God among men shall be a universal and united kingdom, v. 9. (1.) It shall be a universal kingdom: *The Lord shall be King over all the earth*. He is, and ever was, so of right, and in the sovereign disposals of his providence his

kingdom does *rule over all* and none are exempt from his jurisdiction; but it is here promised that he shall be so by actual possession of the hearts of his subjects; he shall be acknowledged King by all in all places; his authority shall be owned and submitted to, and allegiance sworn to him. This will have its accomplishment with that word (Rev. 11:15), *The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ.* (2.) It shall be a united kingdom: *There shall be one Lord, and his name one.* All shall worship one God only, and not idols, and shall be unanimous in the worship of him. All false gods shall be abandoned, and all false ways of worship abolished; and as God shall be the centre of their unity, in whom they shall all meet, so the scripture shall be the rule of their unity, by which they shall all walk.

3. The land of Judea, and Jerusalem, its mother-city, shall be repaired and replenished, and taken under the special protection of Heaven, v. 10, 11. Some think this denotes particular favour to the people of the Jews, and points at their conversion and restoration in the latter days; but it is rather to be understood figuratively of the gospel-church, typified by Judah and Jerusalem, and it signifies the abundant graces with which the church shall be crowned, and the fruitfulness of its members, and the vast numbers of them. (1.) The church shall be like a fruitful country, abounding in all the rich products of the soil. The whole land of Judea, which is naturally uneven and hilly, shall be *turned as a plain*; it shall become a smooth level valley, from Geba, or Gibeah, its utmost border north, to Rimmon, which lay *south of Jerusalem* and was the utmost southern limit of Judea. The gospel of Christ, where it comes in its power, levels the ground; mountains and hills are brought low by it, that the Lord alone may be exalted. (2.) It shall be like a populous city. As the holy land shall be levelled, so the holy city shall be peopled, shall be rebuilt and replenished. *Jerusalem shall be lifted up* out of its low estate, shall be raised out of its ruins; when *the land is turned as a plain*, and not only the *mount of Olives* removed (v. 4), but other mountains too, then Jerusalem shall be *lifted up*, that is, shall appear the more conspicuous; she *shall be inhabited in her place, even in Jerusalem*, ch. 12:6. The whole city shall be inhabited in the utmost extent of it, and no part of it left to lie waste. The utmost limits of it are here mentioned, between which there shall be no ground lost, but all built upon, from *Benjamin's-gate* north-east to the *corner-gate* north-west, and *from the tower of Hananeel* in the south to the *king's wine-presses* in the north; when the churches of Christ in all places are replenished with great numbers of holy, humble, serious Christians, and many such are daily added to it, then this promise is fulfilled. (3.) This country and this city shall both be safe, both the meat in the country and the mouths in the city: *Those that dwell in it* shall dwell securely, and there shall be none to make them afraid; there shall be no more of that utter destruction that has laid both town and country waste, no more anathema (as some read it), no more cutting off, no more curse, or separation from God to evil, no more such desolating judgments as you have been groaning under, but Jerusalem *shall be safely inhabited*; there shall be no danger, nor any apprehension of it; neither shall its friends be fearful to disquiet themselves nor its enemies formidable to disquiet them. That promise of Christ explains this—that *the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church*; and so do the holy security and serenity of mind which believers enjoy in relying on the divine protection. II. Here are judgments threatened against the enemies of the church, that *have fought*, or do fight, against Jerusalem; and the *threatening of these* judgments is in order to the preservation of the church in safety. Men that read and hear of these plagues will be afraid of fighting against Jerusalem, much more when these threatenings are fulfilled in some will others hear and fear.

Those that fight against the city of God, and his people, will be found fighting against God, against whom none ever hardened his heart and prospered (v. 12): *This shall be the plague wherewith the Lord will smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem*; whoever they are, God will punish them for the affront done to him, and avenge Jerusalem upon them. 1. They shall waste away under grievous and languishing diseases: *Their flesh shall consume away*, and they shall be miserably emaciated, even *while they stand on their feet*, so that they shall be walking skeletons; nothing shall remain but skin and bones. The flesh which they pampered and indulged, and made provision for, when they were fed to the full with the spoils of God's people, shall now *consume away, that it cannot be seen, and the bones that were not seen shall stick out*, Job 33:21. They *keep their feet*, and hope to *keep their ground*, crawling about as long as they can; but they must yield at last. The organs of sight, the outlets of sin, *their eyes, shall consume away in their holes*, shall sink into their heads or perhaps start out of them; their envious malicious, adulterous eyes, the eyes they had so often fed with spectacles of misery, these shall consume, which shall make not only their countenances ghastly, but their lives wretched. The organs of speech, the outlets of sin, *their tongue, shall consume away in their mouth*, whereby God will reckon with them for all their blasphemies against himself and invectives against his people. Thus *their own tongues shall fall upon them*, and their punishment shall be legible in their sin, as his was whose tongue was tormented in hell-flames. Thus Antiochus and Herod consumed away. 2. They shall be dashed in pieces one against another (v. 13): *A great tumult from the Lord shall be among them*. But are tumults from the Lord, who is the *God of order, and not of confusion*? As they are the sin of those that raise them they are not from the Lord, but from the wicked one, and from men's own lusts; but, as they are the punishment of those that suffer by them, they are from the Lord, who serves his own purposes, and carries on his intentions, by the sins, and follies, and restless spirits, of men. It is of themselves that they *bite and devour one another*, but it is of the Lord, the righteous Judge, that thus they are *consumed one of another* (Gal. 5:15); as Ahab was deceived by a lying spirit from the Lord, so Abimelech and the men of Shechem were *divided*, and so *destroyed*, by an *evil spirit from the Lord*, Jdg. 9:23. Note, Those that are confederate and combined against the church will justly be separated, and set against one another; and their tumults raised against God will be avenged in tumults among themselves. And they shall *lay hold every one on the hand of his neighbour*, to hold him from striking, or to bind him as his prisoner; nay, *his hand shall rise up against the hand of his neighbour*, to strike and wound him. Note, Those that aim to destroy the church are often made to destroy one another; and every man's sword is sometimes set against his fellow, by him whose sword they all are. Some think this was fulfilled in the factions and dissensions that were among the Jews, when the Romans were destroying them all; for they had fought against the spiritual Jerusalem, the gospel-church; and to that well enough agrees v. 14, *Thou also, O Judah! shalt fight against Jerusalem*; the Jewish nation shall be ruined by itself, shall die by its own hands; the city and country shall be at war with each other, and so both shall be destroyed. *Suis et ipsa Roma viribus ruit—Rome was urged into ruin by its very strength*. 3. The plunder of their camp shall greatly enrich the people of God, or the spoils of their country (v. 14): *Judah also shall eat at Jerusalem* (so one learned interpreter reads it); people shall come from all parts to share in the prey; as when Sennacherib's army was routed before Jerusalem there was *the prey of a great spoil divided* (Isa. 33:23), so it shall be now; the *wealth of all the heathen round about, that had spoiled Jerusalem, shall be gathered together, gold, and*

silver, and apparel, in great abundance, that an equal dividend may be made among all the parties entitled to a share of the prize. Note, *The wealth of the sinner is often laid up for the just*, and the Israel of God enriched with the spoil of the Egyptians. 4. The very cattle shall share in the plague with which the enemies of God's church shall be cut off, as they did in divers of the plagues of Egypt (v. 15): All *the beasts that shall be in the tents* of these wicked men, when God comes to contend with them, shall perish with them, not only beasts used in war, as the horse, but those used for travel, or in the plough, as the *mule*, the *camel*, and the *ass*. Note, The inferior creatures often suffer for the sin of man and in his plagues. Thus God will show his indignation against sin, and will make the creature that is thus *subject to vanity* groan to be *delivered* into the glorious liberty of the children of God, Rom. 8:21, 22.

Verses 16-21

Three things are here foretold:—

I. That a gospel-way of worship being set up in the church there shall be a great resort to it and a general attendance upon it. Those that were left of the enemies of religion shall be so sensible of the mercy of God to them in their narrow escape that they shall apply themselves to the worship of the God of Israel, and pay their homage to him, v. 16. Those that were not consumed shall be converted, and this makes their deliverance a mercy indeed, a double mercy. It is a great change that the grace of God makes upon them; those that had *come against Jerusalem*, finding their attempts vain and fruitless, shall become as much her admirers as ever they had been her adversaries, and shall *come to Jerusalem* to worship there, and go in concurrence with those whom they had gone contrary to. Note, As some of Christ's foes shall be made his footstool, so others of them shall be made his friends; and, when the principle of enmity is slain in them, their former acts of hostility are pardoned to them, and their services are admitted and accepted, as though they had never *fought against Jerusalem*. They shall *go up to worship* at Jerusalem, because that was the place which God had chosen, and there the temple was, which was a type of Christ and his mediation. Converting grace sets us right, 1. In the object of our worship. *They shall* no longer *worship* the Molochs and Baals, the *kings* and *lords*, that the Gentiles worship, the creatures of their own imagination, but *the King*, the *Lord of hosts*, the everlasting King, the King of kings, the sovereign Lord of all. 2. In the ordinances of worship, those which God himself has appointed. Gospel-worship is here represented by the *keeping of the feast of tabernacles*, for the sake of those two great graces which were in a special manner *acted* and *signified* in that feast—contempt of the world, and joy in God, Neh. 8:17. The life of a good Christian is a constant *feast of tabernacles*, and, in all acts of devotion, we must retire from the world and rejoice in the Lord, must worship as in that feast. 3. In the *Mediator* of our worship; we must go to Christ our temple with all our offerings, for in him only our *spiritual sacrifices* are acceptable to God, 1 Pt. 2:5. If we rest in ourselves, we come short of pleasing God; we must go up to him, and mention his righteousness only. 4. In the time of it; we must be constant. They shall go up *from year to year*, at the times appointed for this solemn feast. Every day of a Christian's life is a day of the *feast of tabernacles*, and every Lord's day especially (that is the *great day of the feast*); and therefore every day we must worship the Lord of hosts and every Lord's day with a peculiar solemnity.

II. That those who neglect the duties of gospel-worship shall be reckoned with for their neglect. God will compel them to come

and worship before him, by suspending his favours from those that keep not his ordinances: *Upon them there shall be no rain*, v. 17. Some understand it figuratively; the rain of heavenly doctrine shall be withheld, and of the heavenly grace, which should accompany that doctrine. God will *command the clouds that they rain no rain upon them*. Note, It is a righteous thing with God to withhold the blessings of grace from those that do not attend the means of grace, to deny the *green pastures* to those that attend not the *shepherd's tents*. Or we may take it literally: *On them there shall be no rain*, to make their ground fruitful. Note, The gifts of common providence are justly denied to those that neglect and despise instituted ordinances. Those that neglected to build the temple were punished with the want of rain (Hag. 2:17), and so were those that neglected to attend there when it was built. If we be barren and unfruitful towards God, justly is the earth made so to us. Many are crossed, and go backward, in their affairs, and this is at the bottom of it—they do not keep close to the worship of God as they should; they go off from God, and then he walks contrary to them. If we omit or postpone the duties he expects from us, it is just with him to deny the favours we expect from him. But what shall be done to the defaulters of the land of Egypt, to whom the threatening of the want of rain is no threatening, for they have no rain at any time; they need none; they desire none; the river Nilus is to them instead of the clouds of heaven, waters their land, and makes it fruitful, so that what is a punishment to others is none to them? v. 18, 19. It is threatened that *if the family of Egypt go not up, that have no rain*, yet God will find out a way to meet with them, for there shall be, in effect, the same plague wherewith other nations are smitten for their neglect. God can, and often did, restrain the overflowing of the river, which was equivalent to the shutting up of the clouds; or if the river did its part, and rose as high as it used to do, God had other ways of bringing famine upon them, and destroying the fruits of their ground, as he did by several of the ten plagues of Egypt, so that *this* (that is, the same) shall be *the punishment of Egypt* that is the punishment of other *nations* who come not up to *keep the feast of tabernacles*. Note, Those who think themselves least indebted to, and depending on, the mercy of heaven, cannot *therefore* think themselves guarded against the justice of Heaven. It does not follow that those who can live without rain can therefore live without God; for not the heavens only, but all other creatures, are that to us that God makes them to be, and no more; nor can any man's way of living enable him to set light by the judgments of God. This shall be the *punishment*—margin, *This shall be the sin of Egypt, and the sin of all nations, that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles*. The same word signifies both *sin* and the *punishment* of sin, so close and inseparable is the connexion between them (as Gen. 4:7), and sin is often its own punishment. Note, Omissions are sins, and we must come into judgment for them; those contract guilt that *go not up to worship* at the times appointed, as they have opportunity; and it is a sin that is its own *punishment*, for those who forsake the duty forfeit the privilege of communion with God.

III. That those who perform the duties of gospel-worship shall have grace to adorn their profession by the duties of a gospel-conversation too. This is promised (v. 20, 21), and it is necessary to the completing of the beauty and happiness of the church. In general, all shall be *holiness to the Lord*.

1. The name and character of holiness shall not be so confined as formerly. *Holiness to the Lord* had been written only upon the high priest's forehead, but now it shall not be so appropriated. All Christians shall be *living temples*, and *spiritual priests*, dedicated to the honour of God and employed in his service.

2. Real holiness shall be more diffused than it had been, because there shall be more powerful means of sanctification, more excellent rules, more cogent arguments, and brighter patterns of holiness, and because there shall be a more plentiful effusion of the Spirit of holiness and sanctification, after Christ's ascension than ever before.

(1.) There shall be holiness introduced into common things; and those things shall be devoted to God that seemed very foreign.

[1.] The furniture of their horses shall be consecrated to God. "*Upon the bells of the horses shall be engraven Holiness to the Lord, or upon the bridles of the horses (so the margin) or the trappings.* The horses used in war shall no longer be used against God and his people, as they have been, but for him and them. Even their wars shall be holy wars, their troopers serving under God's banner. Their great men, who ride in state with a pompous retinue, shall reckon it their greatest ornament to honour God with their honours. *Holiness to the Lord* shall be written on the harness of their chariot-horses, as great men have sometimes their coat of arms with their motto painted on their coaches; every gentleman shall take the high priest's motto for his, and glory in it, and make it a memento to himself not to do any thing unworthy of it. Travellers shall have it upon their bridles, with which they guide their horses, as those who desire always to be put in mind of it, by having it continually before them, and to guide themselves in all their motions by this rule. The *bells of the horses*, which are designed to quicken them in their journey and to give notice of their approach, shall have *Holiness to the Lord* upon them," to signify that this is that which we ought to be influenced by ourselves, and make profession of to others, wherever we go. [2.] The furniture of their houses too shall be consecrated to God, to be employed in his service. *First*, The furniture of the priests' houses, or apartments adjoining to the house of the Lord. The common drinking cups they used shall be *like the bowls before the altar*, that were used either to receive the blood of the sacrifices or to present the wine and oil in, which were for the *drink-offerings*. The vessels which they used for their own tables shall be used in such a religious manner, with such sobriety and temperance, such devotedness to the glory of God, and such a mixture of pious thoughts and expressions, that their meals shall look like sacrifices; they shall eat and drink, not to themselves, but to him that spreads their tables and fills their cups. And thus, in ministers' families especially, should common actions be done after a godly sort, however they are done in other families. *Secondly*, The furniture of other houses, those of the common people: "*Every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness to the Lord.* The pots in which they boil their meat, the cups out of which they drink their wine (Jer. 35:5), in these God's good creatures shall never be abused to excess, nor that made the food and fuel of lust which should be oil to the wheels of obedience," as had formerly been, when *all tables were full of vomit and filthiness*, Isa. 28:8. "What they eat and drink out of these shall nourish their bodies for the service of God; and out of these they shall give liberally for the relief of the poor;" then are they *Holiness to the Lord*, as the merchandise and the hire of the converted Tyrians are said to be (Isa. 23:18); for both in our gettings and in our spendings we must have an eye to the will of God as our rule and the glory of God as our end. *Thirdly*, When there shall be such an abundance of real holiness people shall not be nice and curious about ceremonial holiness: "*Those that sacrifice shall come and take of these common vessels, and seethe their sacrifices therein*, making no distinction between them and the *bowls before the altar.*" In gospel-times the true worshippers shall worship God *in spirit and in truth*, and *neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem*, Jn. 4:21. One place shall be as acceptable to God as another (*I will that men pray every where*); and one

vessel shall be as acceptable as another. Little regard shall be had to the circumstance, provided there be nothing indecent or disorderly, while the substance is religiously preserved and adhered to. Some think it intimates that there should be greater numbers of sacrifices offered than the vessels of the sanctuary would serve for; but, rather than any should be turned back or deferred. they shall make no difficulty at all of using common vessels, as the Levites in a case of necessity helped the priests to kill the sacrifices, 2 Chr. 29:34.

(2.) There shall be no unholiness introduced into their sacred things, to corrupt them: *In that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts.* Some read it, There shall be no more *the merchant*, for so a Canaanite sometimes signifies; and they think it was fulfilled when Christ once and again drove the buyers and sellers out of the temple. Or though those that were Canaanites, strangers and foreigners, shall be brought into the house of the Lord, yet they shall cease to be Canaanites; they shall have nothing of the spirit or disposition of Canaanites in them. Or it intimates that though in gospel-times people should grow indifferent as to holy vessels, yet they should be very strict in church-discipline, and careful not to admit the profane to special ordinances, but to separate between the precious and the vile, between Israelites and Canaanites. Yet this will not have its full accomplishment short of the heavenly Jerusalem, that *house of the Lord of hosts*, into which *no unclean thing shall enter*; for at the end of time, and not before, Christ shall gather out of his kingdom every thing that offends, and the tares and wheat shall be perfectly and eternally separated.